

news

MPs' reshuffle fever masks the stench of death

London was hot and wet yesterday: the kind of sultry weather when dead things rot quickly. And, as became all too clear in the House, this administration is beyond saving.

Try what medical intervention they might, every bandage has come unravelled, every suture unstitched, every wound infected. Most of those walking around the precincts of the House are only waiting for the electorate to make the official pronunciation of death.

But not all Tory MPs yet realise that their government has booked its trip on Charon's ferry. It was the penultimate day of the parliamentary year, and energised by the prospect of a



DAVID AARONOVITCH

reshuffle, some of them were still working overtime to ingratiate themselves with the whips. Like the furthest extremities of a vast dead beast they continue to twitch, unaware that the heart has ceased to beat.

These deluded souls, who lay their tributes pointlessly at the feet of cracked and crumbling

idols, single themselves out by the ritual inclusion of the inane phrase "New Labour, New Danger" in their contributions. Yesterday began with questions to ministers at the Department of Social Security, who spend more taxpayer's dosh than any other group of ministers.

Pretty important stuff, you might think. Not for John Marshall (Hendon South): "Is this not another new danger from new Labour?" Not for Bob Dunn (Dartford): "New Labour, new danger"; not for Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye), nor for Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne), not even for girthy minister Oliver Heald. All of them grown politicians, but all

reduced to the parroting of a preposterous Central Office slogan every time they opened their mouths.

And for what? Nigel Waterston on the road to the Foreign Secretaryship? Gimme a break. Jacqui Lait to the Whips' Office? Er, yes, actually, that one happened. But if anybody had ever thought that John Marshall was any use at all, they have had 17 years to give him the recognition that he deserves. And for 17 years they have resisted the temptation. Should the whips, who sit on the end of the front bench - taking notes of the "new Labour, new danger" count in the House - have ever suggested to John that he was "under

consideration" then they lied.

But soon it won't matter any way. At Prime Minister's Question Time, John Major told the House that the electorate "will choose low taxes in the 1997 election". He is most certainly right: Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party stands no chance - all the others would rather bathe in a tub of razor blades than put up taxes.

That election cannot come too soon for MPs. As they disperse to spend more time with their families, most of them know that the next session of Parliament will be dreadful - a seven-month wake for a much disliked relative, complete with corpse. Already Mr Major - ke-

babbed yesterday by Mr Blair, who took a toothy soundbite out of the PM's tenderest parts - looks and sounds defeated. In front of him, he could see Labour MPs preening themselves in their mental mirrors, elated by what terrific ministers they are going to make. Worse behind him, his own supporters are running sweeps on the succession: Portillo, Redwood, Howard, Forsyth (if he keeps his seat), Dorrell, perhaps even the Governor of Hong Kong?

If they can't decide, they could always introduce this tie-break: Which candidate has most uttered the phrase: "New Labour, new danger?" It makes you want to weep.

Three arrested by taxi murder police

MICHAEL STREETER

Three men were arrested yesterday by detectives investigating the murder of the Catholic taxi driver Michael McGoldrick.

One of those detained in Portadown, County Armagh, was reported to be a prominent loyalist who has close links with the paramilitary organisation the Ulster Volunteer Force.

Mr McGoldrick, a part-time taxi driver and recent graduate of Queen's University, Belfast, was found shot dead near Lurgan as Orangemen were gathering at Drumcree for their annual march.

Sir Patrick Mayhew, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, yesterday met representatives of the loyalist Apprentice Boys from Londonderry about their march on 10 August near the Nationalist Bogside area of the city.

Many observers, including the police, fear a "Drumcree Mark II", if no agreement is reached between the two communities about the route of the march, which last year provoked Nationalist violence.

At Stormont, informal talks will continue today in the all-party negotiations in an attempt to reach agreement on procedural differences before Monday, when it is hoped full-scale negotiations can start.

George Mitchell, the chairman, will circulate a paper proposing a possible agreement on procedural disputes.

The Ulster Unionists said they were waiting to study the proposals to see whether they represented a realistic way forward. The SDLP said it would be "unconscionable" for no agreement to be reached at least on procedural matters.



Stepping out: Michael Flatley receiving treatment backstage from massage therapist Derry Ann Morgan before last night's premiere of *Lord of the Dance* at the Coliseum, London. Flatley, who shot to fame with the Riverdance show, has injured a calf muscle

Photograph: David Rose

Labour to list top donors

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

Labour yesterday brought forward the publication of the names of big donors to the party in order to head off charges of secrecy over its own funding, as it pursued its attack on Conservative "ministers for sale".

Labour officials said they would publish an "interim" list of big donors in September - contradicting earlier indications that the party would not disclose the identities of individuals and companies donating more than £5,000 until after the election.

Despite much-repeated claims that the party would be completely open about the sources of its funding, it emerged that Labour would not disclose the amounts contributed to the party. It will simply publish a list of names of those giving more than £5,000 in any one year.

Normally, the accounts, to be approved by this year's party conference would cover January to December 1995. This meant that donors to Labour since January this year, when the party's policy of open disclosure was agreed, would not be disclosed until September

1997 - after the last possible date for a general election.

Labour has publicised a number of donations, including £500,000 from the publisher Paul Hamlyn, who will pay for newspaper adverts exhorting party members and trades unionists to vote in the ballot on the party's pre-manifesto, *New Labour, New Life for Britain*.

At a £50-a-head fundraising dinner at the Savoy hotel in London earlier this month, the animal rights pressure group Political Animal Lobby donated £17,500 to party funds to buy Eric Cantona's FA Cup Final shirt in a celebrity auction.

Labour officials were unable to say yet how the party would declare the income from such events. Several companies which bought tickets said they did not regard the payments as political donations and would not be declaring them in their accounts.

A spokesman for Hanson, the Anglo-American conglomerate which donates money to the Conservative party but which also paid for two tickets to the Savoy dinner, said it was regarded as part of its "parliamentary liaison" work.

"It has always been part of our policy to have a dialogue with the main political parties," he said.

In the Commons yesterday, the Prime Minister was forced to reject a claim that he was "hired out" by a club created to raise funds for the Conservative party. "No one can buy access to ministers, no one is promised a job," he said.

John Major was challenged by Peter Hain (Lab, Neath) about a report that for £10,000 members of the Premier Club were offered dinner with Cabinet ministers, and that for £100,000 donors could dine twice a year with the Prime Minister.

The television regulator is expected to ask ITN to justify its interview with the Prime Minister last week, following a complaint by the Labour Party. Labour complained that the seven-minute interview, which led the *News At Ten* bulletin on the night of the TWA 747 crash off New York, broke the legal requirement on ITN to preserve "due impartiality".

The Independent Television Commission is believed to have accepted that ITN has a case to answer, despite the assertion by Stewart Purvis, the ITN chief executive, that "there was absolutely no deal ... about where the interview would be placed in the programme". Labour officials claim that the interview was "soft" and that an equivalent interview was not offered to Tony Blair, the Labour leader. John Rentoul

Benefits may cease to be backdated to the date of claim, if claimants fail to provide all the necessary information when they first apply. Proposals disclosed yesterday outline dramatic changes to the social security decision-making and appeals system.

Sixty per cent of income support claims are filled in wrongly, and "individuals will need to take proper responsibility for providing relevant evidence to the department," said Peter Lilley, the Secretary of State for Social Security. The Child Poverty Action Group said it would be anxious to ensure that individual rights were not lost in the review. Nicholas Timmins

British sex tourists who abuse children abroad will face prosecution in the UK under proposals announced yesterday. Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, also announced plans to extend British courts' powers to try foreign extremists and terrorists resident in the UK who plan or incite crimes abroad.

The proposed legislation on paedophiles follows mounting outcry over British paedophiles who travel to countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Sri Lanka specifically to seek sex with child prostitutes. Victims, witnesses and police in child sex cases could be flown to the UK or give evidence via satellite link. Jason Bennett

Any chance of averting 24-hour strikes on the London Underground, tomorrow and Monday, seemed to evaporate yesterday as insults flew between the protagonists. Lew Adams, general secretary of Aslef, the train drivers' union, accused management of being "sick and incompetent" and London Underground replied that he had been "thumbing through the playground guide to insults".

London Underground was still keen to take the dispute over working time to arbitration, but Aslef wanted to resume less formal talks at conciliation service Acas. Meanwhile attempts continued at Aslef to head off Friday's postal strike and to avoid a month-long suspension of the Royal Mail's monopoly on delivering letters. Barrie Clement

Members of the pop group The Charlatans were "devastated" last night following the death of their keyboard player Rob Collins in a car crash. Collins, 32, died after the red BMW he was driving left the road near Monmouth, Gwent, on the way to a recording session late on Monday night.

The band only recently returned to triumphant chart-topping form after years in the wilderness, and were due to feature as special guests on Oasis' summer tour in a few weeks.

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

Four builders who were crushed to death under tons of rubble when an office block collapsed were unlawfully killed, an inquest ruled yesterday. An inquest at Esher, Surrey, heard how a string of major faults had been found in the 27-year-old offices by builders as they carried out a facelift.

A file will now be sent to the Crown Prosecution Service, with a view to possible prosecution. Site agent Ron Martin, 58, carpenter Peter Berwick, 36, and labourers Mark Malloy, 24, and 21-year-old Richard Barnes, were all killed on 1 August last year. Angry relatives cheered the decision of the jury and said they would fight on for tougher safety laws. Supt David Staines of Staines police, said: "It is our intention to bring to justice those responsible and we will continue as much as we can to do that."

The famous image of the Prince and Princess of Wales kissing on the balcony of Buckingham Palace on their wedding day has been used by the British Safety Council to promote condoms. A poster sent out to health promotion bodies to publicise National Condom Week - 5-11 August - shows a cartoon figure of a condom in front

Appearances can be deceptive



of the newly-wed couple. A headline warns: "Appearances can be deceptive."

Darren Sanders, a campaign organiser for the charity said: "The photograph is a fairytale photograph of what seemed to be a fairytale marriage. It emerged later that it was a sham ... and that the Prince of Wales was having an adulterous affair." It was precisely such cheating within apparently happy relationships, either by affairs or one-night-stands, which led to the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases, he added. Marianne Macdonald

A convicted sex offender has been charged with the rape and murder of Caroline Dickinson, the 13-year-old Cornish girl who was attacked while on a trip to France, it was announced yesterday. The man, a vagrant in his 40s, is reported to have confessed to the crimes after he was picked up by French police on Saturday. He has a criminal record for rape and other sexual offences.

Caroline was found raped and smothered in her bed last Thursday at the youth hostel in the town of Pleine Fougeres. Four friends sharing the same dormitory discovered her body. Jason Bennett

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Six of the best: profiles of the winners in Major's new team

The six MPs promoted in the reshuffle:

Greg Knight, 47, is a likeable Midland MP with a passionate interest in classic American cars with big engines. He brought his most recent acquisition, a six-litre Camaro saloon into Westminster as MPs were debating cutting the mileage allowance for "gas guzzlers".

Approachable, and standing well over six feet tall, Mr Knight was seen as an asset in the whip's office as the quiet enforcer of discipline. He was deeply disappointed to be overlooked for the post of Chief Whip, when Alastair Goodlad was promoted over his head in 1995.

His consolation will be to take on an industry role, as minister of state rank, which effectively makes him number two to Ian Lang, the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr Knight trained as a solicitor and has a special interest in consumer law. Since 1983, he has been the MP for Derby North, where he has a majority of 4,453.

David Willetts, brainy and be-spectacled, is the new Paymaster General, and one of the brightest ministers in the Government. He plays a crucial role as the go-between for Conservative Central Office and Downing Street.

Known as the "deputy to the deputy", Mr Willetts is the number two to Michael Heseltine, the deputy Prime Minister. Mr Willetts, 40, is often to be seen bicycling in a helmet around Whitehall, rather than using an official car.

Although his official title as a minister at the office of public service put him charge of the civil service, his real job has been

coordinating Government strategy and promotion on the Cabinet's committee for policy co-ordination and presentation, to plot the course of Government announcements and attacks on Labour.

The author of *Modern Conservatism*, Mr Willetts became an MP for Havant in 1992. His new title will be seen as a consolation for not gaining higher office in the Cabinet before the election. CB

Jacqui Lait is the first woman to be appointed to the Tory whips' office, and is an ardent pro-European who has been burnt in effigy on the back of a trolley based in her Hastings and Rye constituency. She had failed to take the necessary hard line against the Common Fisheries Policy, which the small local fishing industry regards as a whim, but friends say, like most of the 1992 intake, he is a "mainstream sceptic".

As a whip, Fox was allocated to the Treasury, which meant that he was in regular contact with Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor. He is thus well-placed to know the party's views on Europe, as he would have had to defend the Chancellor's determination to keep the Government's options open on a single European currency to colleagues.

Philip Oppenheim, 40, is a bright, hard-hitting right-winger, who will remain loyal to Kenneth Clarke, as a junior minister at the Treasury.

A committed supporter of free-market economics, Mr Oppenheim is the author of a book on the sunrise economics of the Far East - *Can the West Match Japan* - and he was Mr Clarke's Parliamentary Private Secretary for six years before becoming an employment minister.

David Willetts, Paymaster General, OUT: David Heathcoat-Amory, Paymaster General.

IN: Greg Knight, Minister of State, Department of Trade OUT: Tim Eggar

IN: John Bows, Under-Secretary of State, Department of Transport OUT: Steven Norris

PROMOTED: Philip Oppenheim, Secretary to the Treasury

Who's in and who's out - the full list

IN: David Willetts, Paymaster General, OUT: David Heathcoat-Amory, Paymaster General.

IN: Greg Knight, Minister of State, Department of Trade OUT: Tim Eggar

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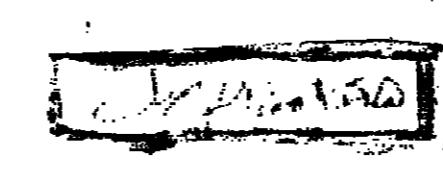
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FICANT SHORTS

news

Judge: PC needs 'ticking off' for assaults

LOUISE JURY

A judge was widely condemned as biased and out of touch yesterday after he halted the case against a policeman accused of indecently assaulting colleagues.

Judge Alistair McCallum said "no serious purpose is being served by airing what goes on in busy police stations" after hearing allegations that Constable Robert Brindle, of the West Yorkshire force,

grabbed the breasts of two female colleagues. Bradford Crown Court was told that on another occasion PC Brindle said aside one of the women and tried to pull her towards him as if for a kiss.

But directing not guilty verdicts on four charges of indecent assault, the judge said "was concerned the case was 'more likely to do harm to the police force than any good'".

He said the appropriate way of dealing with an officer was for

a superior officer "to give him a sound ticking off and make sure he doesn't behave in a way which most people find unacceptable". The judge added: "It does seem to me there's been one standard for a police officer and one standard for a civilian."

After the trial, Lynne Tolan, the detective chief inspector who investigated the case, accused the judge of "taking the system of justice back 40 years" and said his comments were "biased, crass, prejudicial, out-dated and completely out of order".

She said: "To suggest that a telling off was more appropriate when you are dealing with an experienced mature police officer who is alleged to have indecently assaulted a colleague, is tantamount to an invitation to all other male officers to touch up their female colleagues."

Norman Bettison, the assistant chief constable of West Yorkshire, said disciplinary action against PC Brindle, 41, who

has been suspended for two years, would be "robustly pursued". He went on: "The force stands by its decision to bring the case to court and hopes this sends a clear signal that any form of physical abuse or harassment is totally unacceptable." PC Brindle had denied all charges.

The case was the second in two months that sexual harassment allegations have been made against West Yorkshire police officers. In May, PC Karen Wade lost a claim of sex

discrimination against the force and three officers. She is expected to appeal. Her industrial tribunal in Leeds heard there was a "culture of sexual harassment" in the force.

Yesterday, Mr Justice McCullum said evidence showed "a fair degree of horseplay took place during the canteen breaks between officers of both sexes".

The jury was told by one of the policewomen that a male officer had made a joke in the Halifax station canteen in Sep-

tember 1994 about the size of her breasts. She described how PC Brindle had asked to see them and, despite her efforts to protect herself with her arms across her front, he put his hands up underneath hers and held her breasts.

She said bawdy banter was normal at the station and she was not particularly upset by it - "but I felt that Bob Brindle's actions went a step further".

Julie Bindel, of the pressure group Justice for Women, said

the judge should resign. "The trivialising of sexual assaults on women gives men a clear message - that they can do this and get away with it."

But Jean Smith, of Rights of Women, a legal policy unit, said if a judge resigned every time such a comment was made there would be none left. "What judges really need is training to recognise and understand the sort of issues involved in a case like this. And we do need to have more women judges."

In from the cold: Now they are no longer spreading the communist web old agents have turned to revealing their secrets

Travel KGB and spy on the world

HELEN WOMACK
Moscow

IT'S amazing what you can read in Russia now that the censors have put away their pencils. Traders hawk all manner of books, from guides to tantric sex, to translations of Barbara Cartland.

But the most bizarre book of the season, which was launched with a signing ceremony at the Moskva book shop this week, has to be *The KGB's Travel Guide to the cities of the world*.

For decades, KGB agents were among the very few Soviet citizens privileged enough to experience life on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Now, seven retired spies offer their tips on how to dress, where to eat and what to see to a new generation of Russians who are about to travel abroad.

The book, published with

Colonel Lyubimov says he'd rather eat fish and chips and go to pubs than see *Les Misérables*

the permission of the Lubyanka, headquarters of the security services now called the FSB, is light-hearted and gives away no real secrets. Former agents in Paris, Rome, London, Cairo, New York, Mexico City and Bangkok simply recount anecdotes from their days in the field.

For a travel guide, the book is short on maps and pictures. But it costs only 19,500 roubles (£2), well within the reach of ordinary Russians, most of whom are armchair travellers as their meagre salaries do not stretch to foreign jaunts.

The section on Cairo is introduced by Lev Bausin, who appears in a passport photograph looking unmistakably Soviet despite his disguise of Arab headgear. Mikhail Brashchenov reminisces about the wonderful *moules à la provençale* he ate in Paris, but advises his fellow Russians to seek their restaur-

ants away from the Montmartre area because it is overrun with noisy tourists.

His colleague in New York, Oleg Brykin, had a harder time. He remembers that his KGB allowance was so small that he had to take sandwiches with him on a train trip to Chicago. On another occasion, he nearly got eaten himself when he went to meet an agent by the lion's cage at the Bronx Zoo, only to discover this was a park where the animals roamed freely.

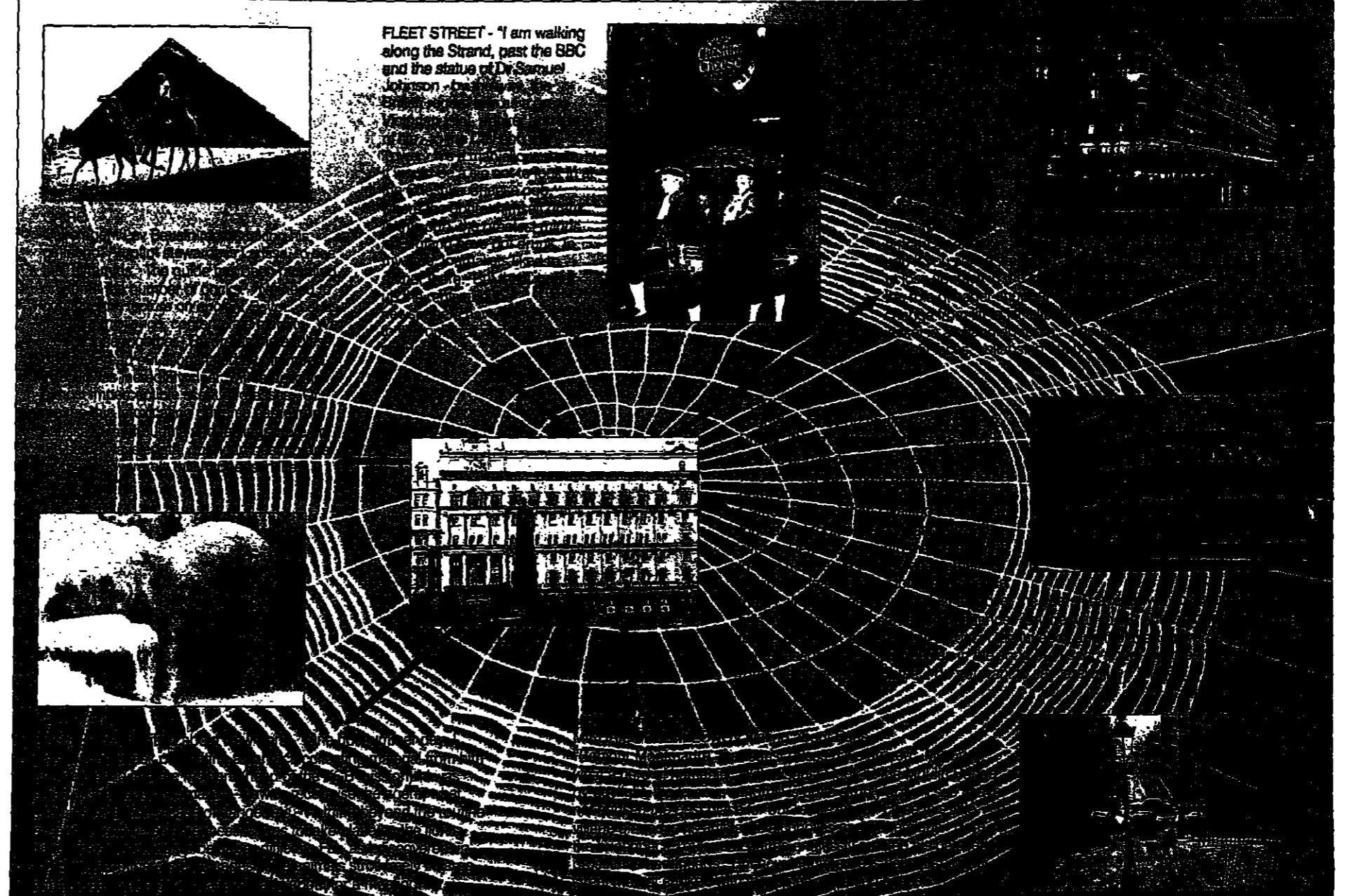
For British readers, of course, the most interesting chapter is Mikhail Lyubimov's memoir of his time in London in the early 1960s before he was expelled for "activities incompatible with his diplomatic status". After that, his career went from bad to worse, as he was the careless controller of the spy Oleg Gordievsky who spectacularly defected to Britain in 1985. But Colonel Lyubimov, who has already helped to supplement his meagre KGB pension by publishing one book of memoirs, looks back on it all with a gentle humour.

In order to contribute to the guide book, he was allowed to return to Britain and he goes down memory lane with an old friend identified only as Chris from Hampstead. The two are riding into central London from Heathrow Airport. "Do you know who you've got in the back of the cab?" Chris asks the Scottish taxi driver. "He's a former KGB colonel, a dangerous spy who in his time recruited Tories left and right."

"Good on yer," says the driver. "Those damned Tories have ruined the country." "Poor people from the north of England do not like the Tories," Colonel Lyubimov explains to his readers. "I felt very satisfied, I did not work in vain."

The colonel returns to all his old haunts, including Hyde Park where he used to chat up British women, passing himself off as a Swede. He visits the House of Commons and describes the debates there, which once thrilled him, as tame in comparison with the fist fights in today's Russian parliament.

Colonel Lyubimov, who confesses to a "strange love for England", is, in many ways, more English than the average contemporary English person, al-

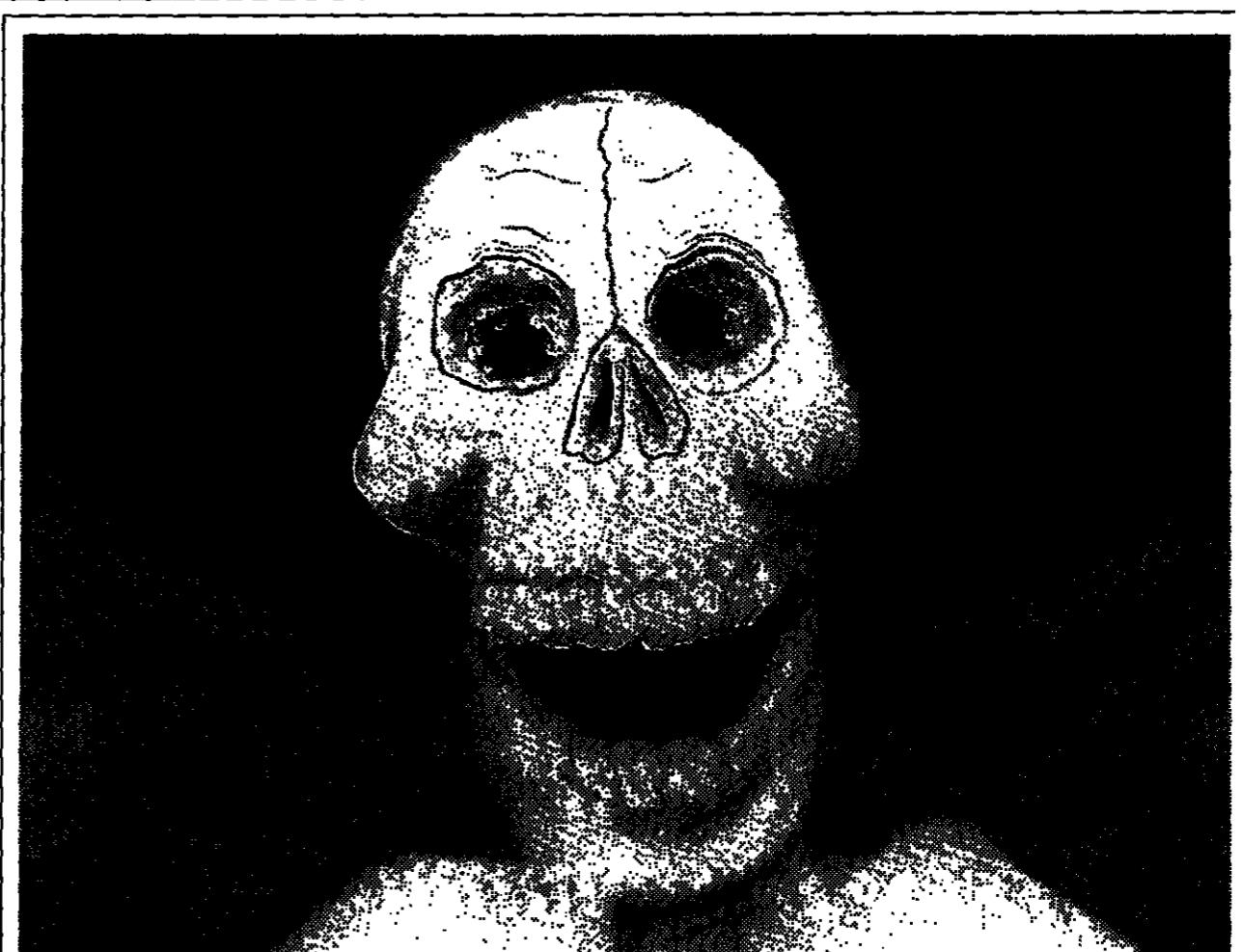


and chips, the best of an otherwise dull British cuisine, and go to pubs.

In the Sherlock Holmes pub on Baker Street he advises vodka-drinking Russians to persevere with whisky as it will reward them in the end. "Scoffish whisky demands patience," he says. "It's like learning to love Richard Strauss. When you acquire the taste, you will go from Johnny Walker to the single malts."

The only piece of trade craft that Colonel Lyubimov reveals is that Harrods is an excellent place to lose anyone who might be following you because it is crowded and has many entrances, exits, emergency exits and changing rooms. But he advises against shoplifting there. Because of the threat of Irish bombs, he says, the shop is as riddled with security personnel as a "cake is stuffed with raisins".

Colonel Lyubimov, who confesses to a "strange love for England", is, in many ways, more English than the average contemporary English person, al-



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Appeal of electronic organiser leaves Filofax looking thin

LOUISE JURY

It would not be the first time the death of the Filofax has been predicted. With the demise of the Yuppie, the classic Eighties organiser did look peril.

But it clawed its way back, transforming its market from City types with mobiles to women who found its ring-bound pages handy for organising their social and domestic lives.

When the Filofax Group yesterday warned that its first-half profits would not be as good as those in the same period last year, share prices dropped immediately.

But Robin Field, the chief executive who has masterminded an increase in sales to 2 million a year compared to 200,000 at the height of the Yuppie boom, was confident that the note of caution said nothing about the Filofax itself.

The main reason for the profits warning was a one-off reduction in demand from the company's main British customer, understood to be WH Smith, after a stock-taking exercise, he said.



Photograph: Andrew Buurma

The Filofax itself was still "relevant to people's needs", he added. Neither was there any image problem. "Some of the most image-conscious people still use them. In Germany, for example, where people are very conscious of image and having the right sort of goods our sales are still growing extremely fast."

The company expected sales to be up 10 per cent on last year, Mr Field said. "But that is not as much up as we would like and not as fast as we've been used to growing in the past five years."

The devices appeal to women

Nonetheless, there is a battle in the market-place for the right to organise people's lives, with the electronic personal organiser increasingly attracting the attention of the busy executive.

A spokeswoman for Psion, the market leaders which on average makes 25,000 personal organisers a month, said: "People who want the latest technology go for Psion and we know from the feel of the market that it is mostly males," aged from 25 to 60."

People might not be flashing the Filofax as a status symbol at clubs such as the Groucho any more. "But you certainly wouldn't want to show off a Psion," he said. "You just use it."

Filofax crash, page 16

news

BSE sheep can pass disease to offspring

SARAH HELM
Brussels

Fears that sheep throughout Europe could be infected with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, posing a wide 'risk' to human health, continued to grow yesterday as confused statements in Brussels failed to ease the alarm.

Although European Commission officials insisted that a proposed ban on sheep brains, spleen and nervous tissue was 'precautionary', they said little to reassure consumers that lamb and mutton is completely safe to eat.

Publicly, commission spokesmen attempted to play down the dangers of BSE in sheep, raised on Monday when Franz Fischler, the agriculture commissioner, proposed a European Union ban on sheep offal.

Douglas Hogg, the agriculture minister, who will announce Government measures to tackle any BSE risk from sheep today, also denied there was a threat from British lamb and declared it safe to eat yesterday.

He said: "What we are dealing with is a theoretical risk. It has been found that it is possible to transmit BSE to sheep and therefore out of an abundance of caution the various advisers have recommended that we exclude various parts of the carcass which are not actually eaten anyway."

However, the private assessments made yesterday by senior Commission veterinary experts suggests far deeper concern.

From the few facts available, it is clear that the European Commission's proposal to ban sheep offal, announced on Monday, was based on firm new scientific evidence that sheep can be infected with mad cow disease.

The evidence stems from laboratory research and there is no proof yet that any farm-reared sheep have become infected. Commission experts said yesterday, however, that this scientific evidence is worrying because it shows that if sheep are infected with BSE, the disease can be transmitted from mother to offspring - which has not been proved to happen in cattle.

Infected sheep would pose a greater risk to human health because the 'dosage' of the lethal BSE protein found in the sheep organs during the experimental infection was far higher than the dosage in cattle. The disease was also found in more organs in sheep than it has been in cattle.

Commission spokesmen insisted yesterday that once action had been taken to remove the 'at-risk organs' from lamb and

older sheep the meat itself would be safe to eat. However, the Commission could not explain why the same approach was not applied to cattle, where BSE was also said to be only present in certain organs and not in the meat itself. There was no guidance about the safety of sheep meat now, before the precautions are in place. And there was no guidance about how often the 'at-risk' organs find their way into human food.

The evidence which sparked

Mr Fischler's announcement

that sheep may also contract

BSE was gathered by the Edinburgh Institute of Animal

Health, and published in the *Veterinary Record* on 1 June. The research showed that sheep fed with minced brains of cattle infected with BSE could contract the disease.

BSE in cattle is thought to be caused by feeding the animals with sheep offal infected with scrapie. The Edinburgh research is understood to be the first proof that BSE can be passed back to sheep. Whether as scrapie is not believed to pose any risk to humans, BSE does.

The Edinburgh evidence was worrying enough for France to ban the consumption of sheep offal some weeks ago. The

Dormont committee, the French government's scientific advisory body, is believed to have recommended the French ban partly on the basis of the Edinburgh research.

The Edinburgh evidence was

also thought worrying enough by a BSE expert group which reports to the EU's scientific veterinary committee, to urge Mr Fischler to call for a ban of the sheep offal throughout the EU.

The Commission proposal

for a ban on the sheep offal will

be discussed by member states

at the next meeting of the Standing Veterinary Committee in about two weeks' time.

Crisis brings the hammer down for last time at sale

KATE WATSON-SMYTH

George Lake has been coming to market at King's Lynn for 70 years. Before that, his father joined his grandfather there on Tuesday. But George will not be coming any more.

Yesterday the 300-year-old market in the small Norfolk town held its final auction - as the BSE crisis forced its closure.

Prices of livestock have fallen so low that the market's owner, Barry Hawkins, can no longer afford to stay in business.

At the beginning of the year, Mr Hawkins would regularly auction about 80 cattle for an average of 125p a kilo (57p a pound). Two months later, he was selling 20 animals for 100p a kilo. Not good news for a man who works on commission.

Mr Hawkins blames the closure on the Government's handling of the BSE crisis. "It is a very sad day - it really is the end of an era. I feel very sorry for the small farmers," he said.

More than 100 farmers gathered under the leaden Norfolk

sky for the market's last sale. They stood in knots of four and five, shaking their heads and remembering the old days, not so long ago, when the racket from more than 1,000 cattle and sheep would all but drown their conversation.

Mr Lake had no animals to sell yesterday but he wanted to say goodbye. Watching the farmers unload their stock, he admitted to feeling nervous about the future.

"I suppose I shall have to find another market, but Lynn was so convenient for me. The atmosphere here has always been so friendly and I shall miss it," he said. "We always looked forward to market day."

Most of the farmers were resigned to the fact that they would have to travel further to sell their livestock, but they remained philosophical. Brian Reynolds, a foreman at a large farm in nearby Swaffham, said: "There is an overwhelming feeling of sadness, but there's no point being angry at something we can do nothing about."

Meanwhile, in the auction house, Mr Hawkins was preparing notes for his final sale. "I don't normally bother with any speeches, but today is different, and I want to thank everybody for their loyalty," he said.

By the time he rose to speak, the yard was packed. And when he repeated his assertion that the Government was to blame, there were loud cheers.

Patricia Parris, who had travelled up from Ongar, Essex,

with six cattle, agreed with him. Five years ago she had 500 head of cattle. By March of this year she had reduced the numbers to 220, and since the EU ban she has been selling them as fast as she can. "I'm giving up and getting out," she said. "Nobody thought the crisis would last this long but now I can't see an end to it... The Government should have been in control of this situation a long time ago."

It took just over an hour for

all the cattle to be sold. The last lot was a Belgian Blue, number 43, weighing in at 595kg. The bidding picked up as two farmers battled for the honour of buying the last animal to be sold at King's Lynn.

A bush descended as bidding passed 200p. The final price was 253p, and King's Lynn supplier John Fowler walked away in triumph, smiling as he joined the other farmers shuffling slowly out of the market.

End of the line: One of the last animals to be sold at King's Lynn market which held its closing sale yesterday, as the BSE scare continued to take its toll. Photograph: Brian Harris

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

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Richard Branson and 'Tracker' scan the horizon for hassle-free savings.

Virgin Direct has created a PEP for people who utterly loathe saving money. They realised that tax efficient regular saving is often too complicated or just too plain dull to consider. So they simplified it. And with payments from £50 to £500 a month, no pushy salesmen and no financial gobbledegook, what could be easier?

The company's first product - an index tracking Personal Equity Plan (or PEP for short) - was created as a result of Richard Branson's frustration with the financial services industry. "I read the personal finance pages for 20 years but could never find consistently good performance or fathom out all the meaningless jargon," explains Branson.

Jargon free zone
PEPs should be an integral part of most people's financial plans. But Virgin felt that their potential had never been realised - mainly because of their packaging. "We researched nearly 1,000 PEPs and then designed one to beat them," adds Branson. "We found that the majority of people were simply put off by the way PEPs were shrouded in meaningless financial jargon."

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Virgin's strategy is completely straightforward. It doesn't rely on costly, fallible fund managers attempting to guess which shares will perform best. The Virgin Direct PEP tracks the FT-SE Actuaries All-Share Index, which covers more than 900 of the largest companies quoted on the London Stock Exchange.

Simplicity

Rowan Gormley of Virgin Direct picks up the story: "We've made it incredibly simple for individual investors to participate in the returns of the stock market while spreading the risk. The easy option is to leave spare cash in a current account, earning a pitifully low rate of interest. Most of us just can't be bothered to go through the hassle of looking for a better home for our savings, even though we know that it's the sensible thing to do. With history showing that shares tend to provide better returns than other types of investment over five years or more, our Growth PEP gives everyone the chance to reap the rewards!"

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That's why Virgin Direct has put so much effort into making the normally tedious and complicated process as easy and painless as possible.

"Basically, we've designed our regular savings PEP for people who know they really should be saving, but have never quite got around to doing anything about it!" says Rowan Gormley.

What's a PEP?

- Personal Equity Plans were designed as a Government savings incentive.
- They are based on investment in the stock market.
- Any profit from a PEP is entirely free of tax.
- You can save up to £6,000 in a general PEP each tax year.
- You should be prepared to put your money away for at least five years...
- ...but your money can be withdrawn easily if you need to.
- By investing on a regular monthly basis, savers can iron out the peaks and troughs of the stock market and reduce risk.

'At Virgin Direct, we've always had one single-minded aim: to offer straightforward, good quality products at the lowest possible price. We will not compromise on performance or customer service - and we refuse to have anything to do with salesmen and we never pay commission.'

Richard Branson

Spring

arts news

Cl. 11/11/96
Britpop rides high: The Mercury prize is dedicated to innovation but the shortlist of 10 albums is daringly predictable



Courtney Pine: Flying the flag for jazz in the 'top 10'

Statue snub in the battle over Britten

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

Proposals to erect a statue of the composer Benjamin Britten in the graveyard where he is buried were turned down by the town council, in an apparent snub, it emerged yesterday.

Britten, in his day the first major composer to be born in England for 300 years, was one of the greatest opera composers of this century. He lived in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, for 30 years and is buried there.

But when the district council suggested putting up a statue or bust to honour him, Aldeburgh town council rejected the idea and discussed the options of planting trees, putting up a bird table, or erecting a statue of a fisherman to emphasise the town's fishing heritage.

The decision, communicated to Suffolk Coastal district council in a letter, has surprised and angered Britten's admirers, who claim that if it was not for the composer few would have heard of the town.

Britten and his life-long companion Peter Pears set up the Aldeburgh Festival which performs much of Britten's music and attracts musicians from all over the world.

Aldeburgh's town clerk, Andrew Harris, explained

yesterday: "It is not as if Benjamin Britten was born and bred in Aldeburgh - he was born in Lowestoft.

"We have several other well-known people who were born here, such as George Crabbe, the poet, and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Britain's first woman doctor.

"We want people to know that there is more to Aldeburgh than just Benjamin Britten. We have just spent £12,000 on a new play area which is of more practical benefit to the town and its people than a statue or bust."

"We are not anti-Britten, but if there is money available councillors feel that there were other things to spend it on which would be of greater benefit to the town and its people."

"There are already several things to commemorate him in the town. There is a blue plaque on the side of the house where he lived and a window dedicated to him in the parish church."

John Richardson, a member of Suffolk Coastal district council, said he had been surprised by the town council's reaction. But it had later emerged that Britten had not wanted such a tribute, he said.

However, a local Britten historian, who asked not to be named, observed: "There seems to be a feeling among council members that his contribution to the town was highly debatable."

"Just because he wasn't born and bred here and didn't live here all the time they doubt his value. It is dreadful that such a great man should be subjected to such an apparent snub."

Britten was born in 1913 and moved to Aldeburgh after the end of the Second World War. Some of his most famous works including the operas *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd* and *Noye's Fludde*, are set on the Suffolk coast.

He underwent heart surgery in 1973 and never fully recovered. He died in December 1976, six months after he had been made Baron Britten of Aldeburgh in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

At rest in Aldeburgh: The composer Benjamin Britten

DAILY POEM

July

By Jacques Réda

*On the dial of the months which turn and return
Deluding sometimes as to the flavour of the seasons
(Those January springs, October and its abundance),
July belongs not to time but to space.*

*Time seems to have hoisted it onto a shield
And with the broad but slow and single stroke of the wing
It takes flight while the early sun
Following its curve would never (as you see*

*When you say: come on, just another mile:
The trees on the path are still hardly darkened,
The bank is still in flame where evening has lodged)
Leave the horizon's edge and disappear.*

*Long will it leave its rays to wander secretly
Throughout the countryside and in the rivers' waters
And we will no longer know how to tell the borders
Between two skies on fire each fighting the other.*

*Then, slowly looming in the enormous star-studded
Volume, will rise to weigh the warmth
Of the limpid air and the luminous pallor
Of the roads, the untroubled scale of the moon.*

Jacques Réda was born in 1929 and for a long time worked as a reader for France's most prestigious publisher Editions Gallimard. His "calendrier élégiaque", a masterly slope through the months and seasons, appears in a bi-lingual collection from Bloodaxe (£10.95) of *The New French Poetry*, edited by David Kelley and Jean Khalifa.

Blur in Different Class to Preachers and Pine

ANDREW MUELLER

Albums by Oasis and Pulp were in a top 10 announced yesterday of contenders for the prestigious Mercury Music Prize, but their rivals Blur failed to be ranked.

Dubbed the Booker of the music world, the £25,000 prize was set up by Mercury Communications in 1992 to honour the best album released by a British or Irish artist in the previous year, as part of a "commitment to innovation and excellence in the arts".

Whether the prize, whose winner this year will be announced on 10 September, has been responsible for any innovative or excellent art is a moot point. All but one of those chosen by the panel of 10 chaired by the music critic Simon Frith fall into the same unoffical categories from which contenders have been drawn in recent years.

Contenders for the musical crown

- Pulp - Different Class
- Underworld - Second Toughest in the Infants
- Courtney Pine - Modern Day Jazz Stones
- Manic Street Preachers - Everything Must Go
- Norma Waterson - Norma Waterson
- Oasis - (What's the

In the Bleeding Obvious Choices That Nobody Could Possibly Object To come are the richies of the Britpop aristocracy: *Oasis* and *Pulp*, plus *Black Grape's* *It's Great When You're Straight... Yeah!* and *Manic Street Preachers' Everything Must Go*. Three of the previous four Mercury winners (*Primal Scream* in 1992, *Suede* in 1993, *Portishead* last year) have come from this short-odds end of

the line-up. *Oasis* must fancy their chances.

Bearing the flag for the Jazz And/or Folk Albums Which Lend Proceedings Some Credibility But Really Don't Have A Prayer is Courtney Pine's *Modern Day Jazz Stories* and Norma Waterson's self-titled solo album. They should enjoy the dinner, anyway.

Occupying the Populist Dance-type Album Included

To Prove This Thing Isn't The Preserve Of White Boys With Guitars is Mark Morrison's *Return Of The Mack*. Carrying on where Leftfield's *Leftfield* left off last year in the Maverick Tech-no Record We Don't Really Understand But Read Something About In Melody Maker department is Underworld's *Second Toughest In The Infants*, which may be worth a dark-horse bet. It's certainly got more of a chance than this year's Record By Surreally Obscure Classical Kinda Artist, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Beltane Fire*.

Which leaves *Help*, recorded in a day by various Britpop luminaries, and Paul McCartney. It looks unbeatable. The trouble is, although *Help* contains moments of brilliance, it is, by definition, also very patchy. Do Mercury really want to reward good intentions over achievement?



Outsider: Norma Waterson has little chance of the prize

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Nurses may operate with patients' consent

Doctors were reminded yesterday to follow strict rules when allowing nurses and other non-medical staff to carry out simple operations.

A report from the British Medical Association said it was important for the different specialist professions to agree clear guidelines on how surgical procedures can be conducted by staff who are not doctors.

The BMA's joint consultants

committee (JCC), which represents all the Royal Colleges, said tasks should only be given to staff who are appropriately trained and supervised, and in all cases the patient must be kept informed.

The JCC said: "The approved list of minor surgical procedures that a non-medically qualified person may perform must be precisely defined and not changed without agreement.

both satisfactory service and patient safety".

A patient's consent had to be obtained before a non-medically qualified health practitioner could perform an operation.

The JCC also said:

"Any patient being operated on by a non-medically qualified member of staff must always be informed of the training and sta-

tus of the practitioner, and sign a consent form before the procedure goes ahead.

Sir Rodney Sweetnam, president of the Royal College of Surgeons, said: "Animals are protected from having any operation on any part of their body than by anyone other than a fully trained vet. But the public does not have the same protection. It's an anomaly."

Professor Sir Norman Browne, chairman of the JCC, said: "We have become concerned at a number of non-medically qualified staff have been expanding their duties and carrying out tasks which they are not strictly qualified to do.

"Our concern is not that they should not do these tasks, but if they do expand their role, they must be properly trained, follow a strict protocol and be supervised."

work, which exceeds the capacity of the medical workforce".

They also denied that the guidelines constituted protectionism, designed to safeguard surgeons.

Liz Jenkins, director of policy and practice at the Royal College of Nursing, said: "It is both welcome and relevant for nurses to perform medical procedures, where they have been given appropriate training."

Thames Path opens at length to walkers

MATTHEW BRACE

Today the Thames Path National Trail will be opened after seven years of effort, bringing to completion a plan for Londoners and others to be able to walk along the entire length of the river.

The 180-mile path, one of 12 in the National Path network created by the Countryside Commission and local authorities, runs all the way from the source of the river to the Thames Barrier in Woolwich, south-east London.

Opening up the Thames Path has cost a total of £1.2m. The pedestrian way has been created by the Commission and the Environment Agency (formerly the National Rivers Authority).

The path runs the length of the Thames from its source, the Isis, which rises in a field near Kemble in Gloucestershire, on the edge of the Cotswolds, and follows its winding route across southern England, into and through London, past the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, to the strikingly futuristic structure of the Thames Barrier at Woolwich, south east of the capital.

For a few miles on its journey through the shires, the river forms the border between Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, before heading north to Oxford



Sitting pretty: The Thames towpath at Runnymede, Surrey

Photograph: Edward Sykes

and south again to Berkshire, through Windsor and finally into London. The idea of giving walkers better access to the river has been around since the 1920s, when the desire was first voiced to walk it from end to end.

Increasing public demand

for recreation and access to the countryside in recent years has created the impetus to make the path a reality. New bridges have been built along the path at Temple and Bourne End near Marlow in Buckinghamshire, and at Shifford in Oxfordshire. Stiles, fences, gates

and surfacing have also been introduced to help walkers, and the path is sign-posted throughout its length.

Jane Bowden, from the Countryside Commission, admitted that there were a few sections in London which were still not as attractive as might be de-

sired, because they are redevelopment sites. "There are a few miles that aren't quite the best they could be yet, but we didn't want to keep people waiting until they were all ready, because that could take a long time," she said.

Some waterfront landlords

and residents have refused to allow the path past their doorsteps, but that will not stop determined walkers from embarking on a source-to-mouth tramp, and the Thames Path is expected to prove the most popular of the 12 National Trails.

During the first phase, which ended in 1994, two new breeding populations were successfully introduced in southern England and northern Scotland. At the beginning of the second phase last year, 11 kites were released in the Midlands, of which two have died.

The releases were part of the second phase of a five-year project organised by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and government wildlife conservation organisations, which have released 200 young red kites since 1989.

The once common carrion-eating bird became extinct in England and Scotland at the end of the 19th Century, with a small population clinging on in mid-Wales. The main reason for their demise was because they were persecuted by farmers and gamekeepers who saw them as vermin and a threat to livestock and gamebirds.

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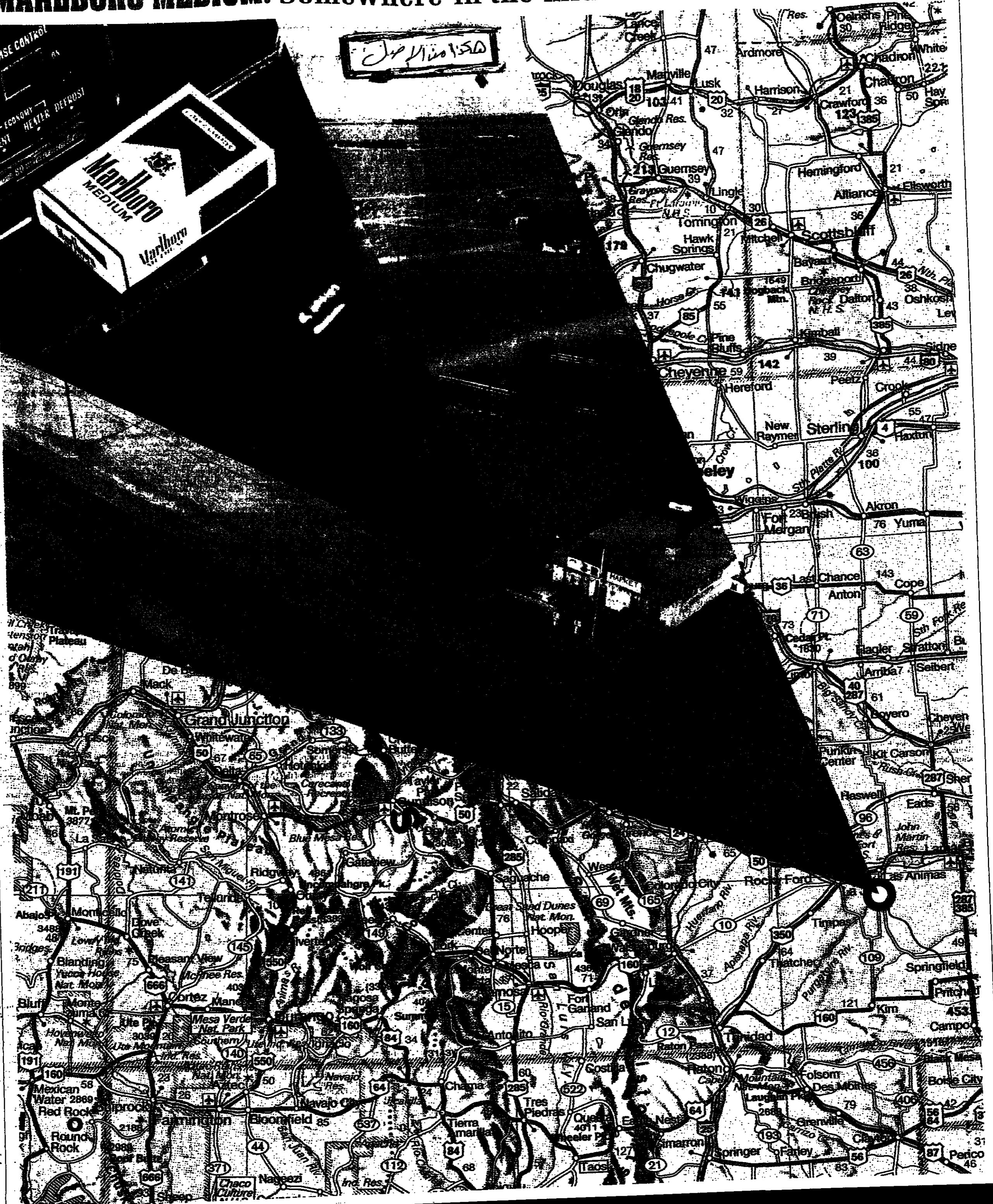
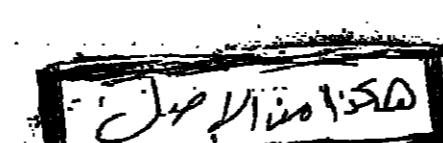
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MARLBORO MEDIUM. Somewhere in the middle of Marlboro Country.



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Burundi's anger over ethnic feud explodes

Bugendena — The helicopter swooped low over the thousands of mourners who had gathered for the funeral of their friends and relatives, 350 members of Burundi's minority Tutsi group massacred last weekend by extremists from the Hutu majority.

The Prime Minister, Antoine Nduwayo, had arrived in Bugendena in central Burundi by helicopter earlier and was talking with the Archbishop of Gitega, Monsignor Joachim Ruhuna, at the edge of the large field where the crowd was assembled.

All eyes were turned towards the helicopter as President Sylvestre Ntibantunganga stepped from it onto the ground. A small group of international journalists moved to

David Orr sees the President stoned by mourners as he attends a funeral of massacre victims

the front of the crowd which was being held back by soldiers armed with automatic weapons.

The photographers stepped forward to record the meeting between the Tutsi Prime Minister and the Hutu President.

They barely shook hands before turning away from one another. As the President, known as Ntiba, walked across the open space, a mob of angry protesters surged forward, jeering and hissing.

"Arrest Ntiba and his acolytes immediately" read one placard held aloft. Another featured a drawing of the President drinking Tutsi blood alongside

Leonard Nyangoma, the Hutu rebel leader blamed for masterminding last weekend's massacre at Bugendena.

Many Tutsi believe the President is implicated in Hutu attacks on the Tutsi community over the last few years.

A rhythmic chanting arose from the protesters pushing towards the President, whose discomfort was quickly turning to fear.

First of all they started throwing branches and sticks. Soon a hail of rocks was falling from the sky and the terrified President was beating a hasty retreat, surrounded by his armed bodyguards. Mr Nduwayo did

nothing to calm the mob. A handful of aimless soldiers circled around the retreating President, safety catches off their weapons.

As a clump of earth hit the President on the chest, his bodyguards pulled their pistols from their pockets and hustled their charge towards the waiting helicopter.

A French reporter received a deep head wound when he was struck by a brick. Other journalists had narrow escapes as the protesters lobbed more rocks and shouted slogans against the foreign media. Many Tutsi have been angered about

a French radio report earlier this week which they say fudged the issue of who is guilty for the country's largest massacre since ethnic fighting in 1993.

The President took off, never having managed to visit the two mass graves where the victims had been laid out in simple wooden coffins.

Charred bodies of men, women and children were still being pulled out of burned buildings hours before the funeral. Others were being found in the undergrowth three days after the attack by Hutu extremists.

One woman, wounded in the head but still breathing, was discovered lying amongst bushes as mourners arrived to pay their respects.

The authorities now say that as many as 350 people were butchered at Bugendena, a settlement of 1,800 Tutsis who had become displaced from their homes in 1993. Most of those who died were women and children. Many of their men folk had perished in the fighting that followed a coup attempt by Tutsi troops three years ago.

Bugendena's inhabitants had just risen on Saturday when more than 1,000 chanting men and women descended on the community. The raiders used guns, and hacked at the residents with machetes. Grenades were thrown and many people were doused with petrol and burned alive. The attack has been blamed on Hutu peasants led by extremists of Mr Nyangoma's CNDD party. Rwandan Hutus, members of the former Rwandan army now exiled in Zaire, are

also said to have been involved.

"These people were innocent" the Prime Minister told the 2,000 mourners. "They were killed because of their ethnic origin, please don't take revenge. Burundians must fight for peace and avoid killing."

As Mr Nduwayo spoke a bitter murmur arose from amongst the mourners.

Having agreed to an initiative

for a regional peace-keeping force to move into Burundi, the Prime Minister has said that he no longer believes foreign intervention can help the stricken country. Many Western diplomats believe that his government's days are numbered and that Mr Nduwayo could be overthrown in a coup at any time.

■ Reuter — International pressure was building yesterday on

Burundi not to repatriate 85,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees. A spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that Burundi had agreed to half temporarily the forced repatriation of refugees, after appeals from the UN.

Paul Stromberg said that Burundian and Rwandan authorities had officially informed the agency of the move to end the exercise. Crammed into trucks and containers, thousands of refugees have already been dumped at the border of the homeland they now fear.

The UNHCR said more than 2,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees were returned yesterday, bringing to 15,400 the number forced back to their homeland since the expulsions began last Friday.

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

The Japanese food-poisoning epidemic dramatically worsened yesterday when within hours two people died from a bacterial infection that has made thousands ill. A 10-year-old girl and an 85-year-old woman were the first fatalities of the most serious outbreak, which started in the western town of Sakai 12 days ago. The deaths bring to seven the number of people who have died from the germ in Japan this year. Health authorities estimate that since May more than 8,000 people have come down in different parts of Japan with severe diarrhoea, vomiting and fever after contracting the O-157 colon bacteria from tainted food. Reuter — Osaka

A man armed with a knife and a pistol talked his way past security guards and entered the Atlanta Olympics opening on Friday before being caught. Police said Roland Atkins, 55, was arrested after dueling guards and entering the arena, where President Bill Clinton and his family were joined by world leaders and other VIPs. The man was carrying a pistol, 11 rounds of ammunition and a knife when arrested. He was charged with criminal trespass, carrying a pistol without a licence and theft of services, which means entering the stadium without a valid ticket. Police said they were unsure how Mr Atkins, from Aurora, Colorado, talked his way past the stadium guards. It was also unclear why news of the security breach broke several days after it took place. Reuter — Atlanta

Advertisements for Perrier that were deemed sexist are to be removed from Belgian cities after women's groups attacked them. The billboards showed three topless women with Perrier bottle-caps over their nipples and the word *wonderbulles*, slang for "wonder bubbles". "It shocked some people," said Eve Magnan, a spokeswoman at Perrier's headquarters in Paris. "It is not company policy to shock." AP — Brussels

Newt Gingrich, the conservative Speaker of the US House of Representatives, admitted that he had smoked marijuana while at university, and then urged the White House to dismiss any staff member found to have smoked crack, cocaine or taken any hallucinogenic drugs in the past three years. "I had an experience with it [marijuana] in college. It was the wrong thing to do and I shouldn't have done it," the Georgia Republican said at a fund-raising event for Representative Charlie Norwood. He said that recent sworn statements by Secret Service agents proved that some White House staffers had smoked crack or taken hallucinogenic drugs since the administration took office. Reuter — Augusta, Georgia

French police arrested a man believed to be third in command in the Eta Basque terrorist organisation. The operation, near the Pyrenees city of Pau, which netted Julian Achiru Egurrola and another man named as Laurence Schlecht, was conducted with the Spanish Civil Guard and follows resumption of Eta's bombing campaign in northern Spain. Madrid has asked for Mr Achiru Egurrola's extradition. In San Sebastian, a former military cook was seriously injured by a bomb under his car. Alfonso Alfredo Machado Pires had until January worked at police barracks in San Sebastian. His name and a description of his car were on a list of Eta targets found by police in March when they arrested an alleged Eta assassin. Mary Doherty — Paris

Three Nigerian political activists are expected to be charged with the murder of the wife of the opposition leader Moshood Abiola. The announcement, in the government-owned *Lagos Times* newspaper, is likely to anger opposition groups, which have accused the government of unjustly implicating them in the killing last month. The three men are leading figures in the National Democratic Coalition, an organisation of political-action groups, and were arrested for questioning on 11 June. Last week a court ordered them to be freed, saying police had no evidence to hold them further. AP — Lagos

In his first meeting with a senior member of the new Israeli government, Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, had talks with David Levy, the Foreign Minister, who said that he "found the Palestinians deeply interested in advancing the peace process". The meeting marks the first time the right-wing Likud party, which won the election in May, has recognised Mr Arafat and the PLO as the representatives of the Palestinians. Mr Arafat sent a special greeting to Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, after the talks, which he described as fruitful. In Jerusalem, Mr Netanyahu said that the government would finish its study on the withdrawal of the Israeli army from most of Hebron, the largest city in the southern West Bank, by the end of the week. Patrick Cockburn — Jerusalem

Getting arrested was not the worst news for a man accused of bumping a 94-year-old woman and snatching her wallet. "You just robbed the mother of the biggest mob chieftain in New York," police Lieutenant Robert McKenna said. Willie King, who was charged with grand larceny. "He had a sort of stunned, resigned look on his face, sort of saying 'How could I be so stupid?'" Lt McKenna said. Mr King remained in custody. Vincent Gigante, described as the head of the Genovese clan, the most powerful US Mafia family, is awaiting trial on murder and racketeering charges. His mother, Yolanda, was mugged in Greenwich Village on Sunday as she walked with another son, Louis Gigante, a Catholic priest. AP — New York



Rest In Peace: A makeshift memorial on a Long Island beach to two victims of TWA flight 800. Investigators have still to discover the reason for the crash and aviation experts say they are now entering the 'realms of what is plausible rather than what is likely'.

Plot thickens in hunt for clues to TWA crash

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

Any explanation of the cause of the TWA crash a week ago which killed 230 people is going to be fairly unbelievable, filling a new chapter in the history of aviation disasters.

While the most far-fetched theories such as a missile attack or a meteorite can probably be ruled out, the accident and the ensuing explosion are unprecedented in aviation history.

Any explanation, therefore,

will have to show how such an unlikely event took place.

Kieran Daly of *Flight International* magazine said: "We are now in the realms of what is plausible, rather than what is likely."

The two most plausible causes remain a bomb or an un-

contained engine failure. And both are highly unlikely. The bomb theory has a number of drawbacks. First, there is the difficulty of getting a bomb with a timing device on to the plane at an airport which is one of the most security conscious in the world. The theory about a device having been put on board at Athens does not hold water since there was no reason why it should not have been set to explode on the first leg of the aircraft's journey.

Second, the devastating explosion means that either the terrorists hit very lucky or they had amazing technical knowledge and good access to the aircraft.

Christopher Ronay, a former head of the FBI's bomb unit, who investigated 30 aircraft

bombings until his retirement two years ago, says he cannot recall any similar incident. "You could blow the hell out of a cargo compartment with a luggage bomb but you have to blow up a fuel cell or an engine to get an explosion like that."

Any mechanical failure which caused such instant devastation would also have to involve an engine and the fuel around it.

The death of a woman and her child in a MD-88 when part of an engine disintegrated during take-off in Florida only a week before the TWA crash shows how destructive such accidents are.

Although the TWA aircraft

was carrying some 48,000 gallons of fuel, the kerosene used by jets is not very explosive. It

needs to mix with air which means that one of the tanks would have to be breached.

While there have been several instances of aircraft blowing up in flight, either through mechanical faults or because of bombs, none of the explosions has been as catastrophic as last week's event. Even at Lockerbie, where a Pan Am Boeing 747 blew up at 31,000 feet in December 1988, there was no fiery explosion until fuel-laden parts hit the ground.

In that case a small bomb, weighing just under a pound,

caused the explosion but the terrorists were very fortunate. If a bomb that size had been in the hold surrounded by luggage, the plane would have survived.

Other aircraft have managed to

land despite having holes punched in them by bombs, such as a TWA flight in 1986 between Rome and Athens when four people were blown out of the plane. Two similar bombings over the Pacific resulted in the deaths of single passengers but the planes limped home.

Michael Barr, director of aviation safety at the University of Southern California, said yesterday: "These planes just don't blow up. There's too many fire walls, too many checks and balances."

Yet, explosion there was.

Frank Taylor, director of Cranfield Aviation Safety Centre, says that burning fuel on the surface of the sea, as well as the television footage of burning

debris falling from the plane shows there was an explosion. While some reports of chemical traces suggesting a bomb were appearing in the US media, there is still no certain evidence and all the safety experts are being very cautious about coming to a firm conclusion.

The relatives of the dead on the TWA plane will probably have to wait until the discovery of the cockpit voice recorder — which will probably be more revealing than the separate flight data recorder — before the reason for the disaster is revealed.

But Mr Taylor is certain that the cause of the crash will be discovered: "It may take several weeks, but they will find out in the end," he said.

Croats deepen Mostar divide

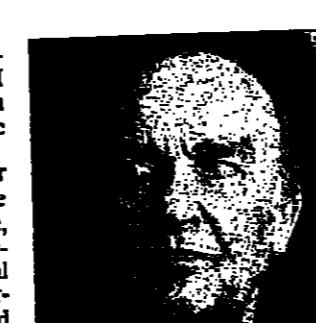
TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

International efforts to reunite the southern Bosnian city of Mostar suffered a setback yesterday when separatist Bosnian Croats boycotted the first meeting of the city council.

The boycott augurs poorly for Bosnia's first post-war national elections on 14 September, which international observers fear may entrench Bosnia's ethnic divisions rather than reunite the country.

Mostar is split into a Croat-controlled western sector of about 45,000 people, and a Muslim-controlled east of about 55,000, following a savage war between Muslims and Croats in 1993 and early 1994, when both were nominal allies against the Bosnian Serbs.

On account of the Croat boycott, Muslim members of Mostar's council decided yesterday to postpone the selection of a mayor and deputy mayor for the city. But they elected a council president, Hamdija Jadic, who is the local leader of the Muslim-led Party of Democratic Action (SDA) and creating a



Izetbegovic: Wrote to EU

dangerous precedent for the September elections'.

Under last year's Dayton peace settlement, Muslims and Croats are united in a federal

entity that Mostar would one day

become the capital of a Bosnian Croat state, or even be absorbed into Croatia.

In a letter to the Irish presidency of the EU, Bosnia's Muslim President, Alija Izetbegovic, condemned the boycott as "blocking the entire process of democratically overcoming the Mostar crisis, and creating a

coalition partners, and 26,464 votes to the nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). In practice, this means Muslims and their allies will have a one-vote majority on the city council, should the Croats change their minds and take their seats.

From a Muslim viewpoint, the Croats have never been genuinely committed to reunifying Mostar. Recently the Croat mayor of western Mostar, Mijo Brajkovic, said that just as the Muslims possessed Sarajevo and the Bosnian Serbs had the northern city of Banja Luka, so the Croats should have Mostar.

Nationalist Croats from western Herzegovina regard Mostar as the capital of the self-proclaimed Croat mini-state of Herzegov-Bosnia, which has survived, partly thanks to support from Croatia.

In an interview in the German magazine *Der Spiegel* last year, President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia said: "The Muslims wanted to reign over the whole of Mostar, then gain control of the sea, and finally create an Islamic state. That is what our Croats are defending themselves against."

The municipal elections gave 28,165 votes to the SDA and its

Czechs at odds over return of Church land

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Central Europe Correspondent

Plans to return more than 430,000 acres of confiscated land to the Czech Church have been welcomed by the Czech Church, which complained in the daily *Lidové Noviny*.

Other critics say that many of the Catholic Church estates were themselves confiscated from the Protestant Church during the 30 years' war in the 17th century.

Given the controversy surrounding the issue, Czech politicians have to date tried to avoid it. But the picture changed this summer when a general election resulted in the governing three-party coalition narrowly losing its overall majority. As a price for the continued support of the Christian Democrats, Mr Klaus agreed to make the restoration of church land a key plank of the government's programme.

That, however, made him vulnerable in the vote of confidence — expected either today or tomorrow — in which he is dependent on the tacit support of the opposition Social Democrats, all of whom are against the return of church land.

Air alert: Fears over sales to the 'enemy' US fighters are armed to meet the 'Gray Threat'

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

The US Air Force is preparing to meet the "Gray Threat". Not the "Grays" – or "Greys" – of the *X-Files*, the meek-like extraterrestrials with the almond-shaped eyes. No, the "Gray Threat" comes from Britain, France and Sweden. Or so says the Rand Corporation, the US think tank which advises the Pentagon and the State Department.

The "Gray Threat" is posed by nations who produce aircraft which they may sell to people whom the Americans (the guys in white hats on white horses) may end up fighting. Not the "Black Threat" – the former Soviet Union – but the "Greys" in between: the Europeans, who will shortly be providing better ones.

The study, subtitled "assessing the next generation European fighters", was funded by the US Air Force and reviewed by two academics to ensure impartiality. It appears as a justification for continued development of the new US fighter, the F-22.

"With the collapse of the Soviet Union serious questions have been raised about the continuing need for highly capable and expensive weapon systems conceived at the height of the Cold War," it says. Existing US aircraft are probably well able to cope with current and future Russian systems. But what, asks the report, if Third World countries were able to buy new European aircraft which "will have significant speed, stealth and

manoeuvrability improvements over current types and are actively being marketed worldwide".

Sceptics would argue this is an extreme manifestation of the military-industrial complex. Without a Soviet threat to justify top-of-the-range weapon systems, the US is using European aircraft – which are designed to beat Russian aircraft – to justify them instead. "The new European fighters employ a considerable amount of cutting-edge aerospace technology and are likely to be equipped with an impressive array of subsystems and advanced components," it says.

Top of the list is the Eurofighter 2000, the aircraft which is expected to perform almost as well as the top-of-the-range US F-22 in air-to-air combat and is also a bomber. Below Eurofighter, and comparable in performance with the latest Russian Su-35 air-to-air fighter, come the French Rafale and the Swedish Gripen.

But the Europeans are expected to provide better after-sales service and that, the report says, may make them more attractive to Third-World dictators whom the US may end up fighting.

The study does not suggest that current US planes would be outclassed by Eurofighters in Third World hands. However, "US forces might be confronted with a rough parity in exchange ratios" – one US plane lost to one Eurofighter, rather than three to one, an unacceptable ratio.

The European strikeforce



EUROFIGHTER 2000

After a shaky start, the first Eurofighter 2000s, built by Britain, Germany, Italy and Spain, are expected to be in service by 2001. They should be available for export by 2005. Eurofighter has now flown 200 hours and performed exactly as the computers predicted it would.

Described by its chief test pilot last week as "the best handling high performance aeroplane that any of us have ever flown", the Eurofighter is supremely agile. With a maximum speed of twice the speed of sound (1,400 mph) and 13 weapons-carrying points, it is a true multi-role aircraft designed as a fighter

which can also act as a bomber.

British Aerospace, the UK prime contractor, claims Eurofighter will win in four out of five encounters with the top-of-the-range Russian fighter, the Su-35, second only to the US F-22 advanced stealth fighter, which will win in nine out of 10. More modest appraisals by the Defence Research Agency, to which the Rand Corporation lends credence, confirm the figure for F-22 but give Eurofighter three wins out of four.

But F-22 is estimated to cost twice as much, and lacks Eurofighter's ability to launch air-ground attacks, making the European aircraft the second best future fighter and the best value for money in the world.



GRIpen

Considerably smaller than the Eurofighter 2000 or Rafale, with 11 weapons stations, the Saab Gripen is a single-seat multi-role aircraft able to take off in a relatively short distance and which has also sparked interest from Norway and Saudi Arabia.

Like the other two, it is the "canard delta" – a combination of "canards" – forward fins, and a delta wing, which give the greatest manoeuvrability at supersonic speeds. The biggest of the three designs, it has had problems in development: two

Gripen have crashed. Saab claims it has now eliminated the problems with changes in the computer software. The Gripen weighs about seven tonnes empty, compared with 10 for Eurofighter, and weighs 28,000kg fully loaded, against 46,000kg for Eurofighter.

The Defence Research Agency gives it an effectiveness index of 0.4 – below existing aircraft types like F-15 and F-18. But Gripen is the cheapest of the three fighters, costing about \$25m (£16m) each, compared with \$50m for the Rafale and a similar amount for the Eurofighter.



RAFALE (FRANCE)

Roughly similar to the EF-2000 in size, weight and weapons load, the Dassault Rafale is a single-seat, multi-role fighter which France will deploy from land bases and aircraft carriers.

The carrier version is lighter than the land-based aircraft, but 80 per cent of its structure is the same. Like Eurofighter, Rafale has been of interest to Norway, and could also attract countries such as the United Arab Emirates, which want to replace French

Mirages. Like Eurofighter, it has a canard-delta combination. It is also described as "stealthy" – but is less so than new US designs.

Unlike the EF-2000, which uses all-composite wings, Rafale is of more conservative design, with a metal skeleton under its carbon-fibre skin. It has 14 weapons-carrying points, and is able to carry 18,000lb of ordnance.

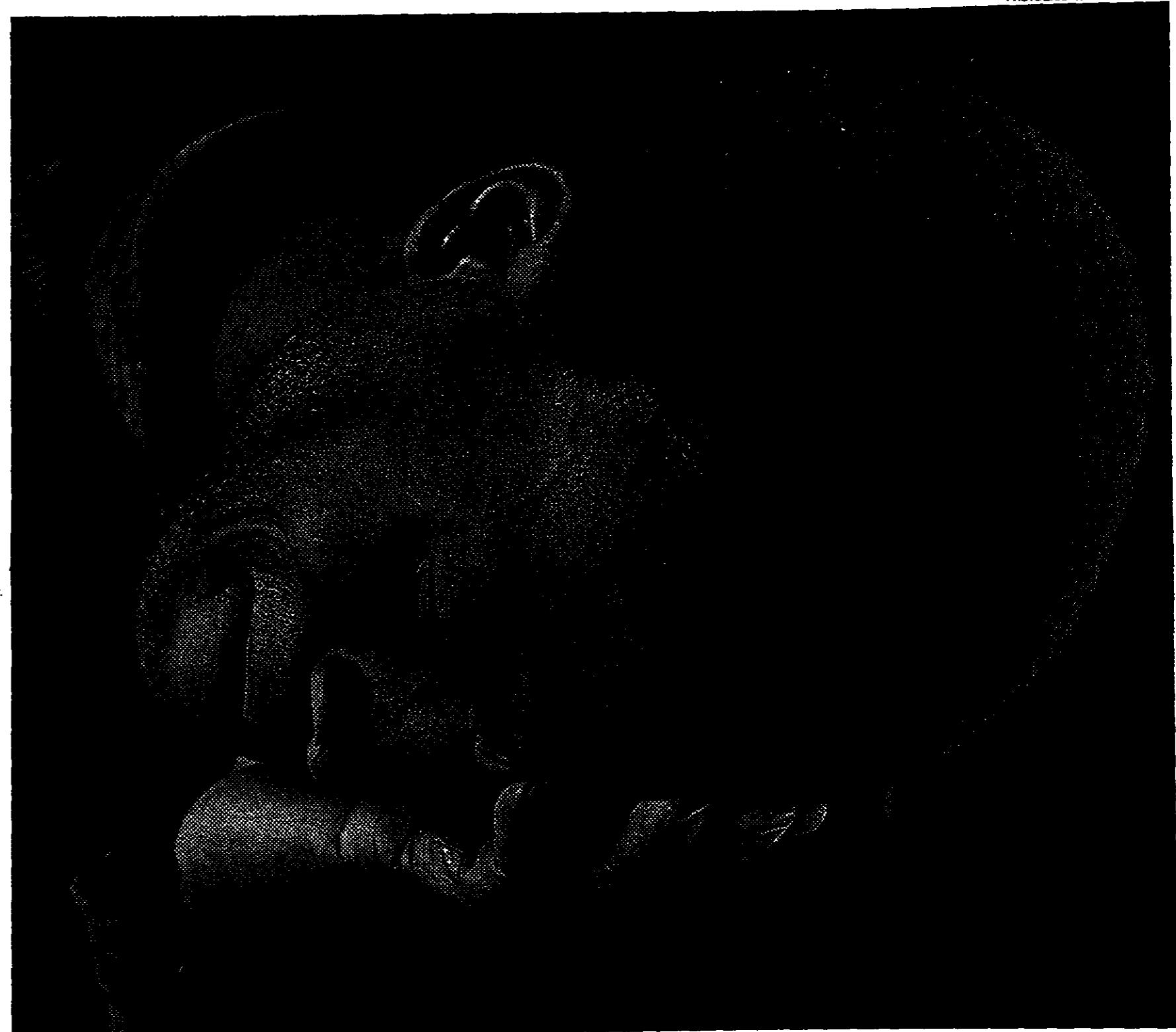
British Aerospace rates Rafale as equal to the Su-35 in air-to-air combat. It has an "effectiveness index" of 0.55, below some existing F-15s but above others.



Taste of the army: A Russian volunteer enjoys grilled grasshopper at pre-military training summer camp near Timonino

Photograph: AP

PHOTOGRAPHY MAX FORSYTHE



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Raise a smile: Bob Dole prompts more jokes than Bill Clinton, who is ahead in the opinion polls by 20 percentage points

Photograph: AP

Jokers have last laugh on Dole

The US presidential candidates are a rich source of humour for TV show hosts, writes John Carlin

Washington — Bill Clinton and Bob Dole will soon be unveiling their television advertisements for this year's presidential elections but, try as each may to portray himself in a solemn light, they will battle to overcome the caricature perceptions fixed in the voters' minds by the jokes on America's popular late-night television shows.

Hardly a night goes by without David Letterman, Jay Leno or Conan O'Brien — television hosts who enjoy almost as much name recognition as the two candidates — venturing a wisecrack about Mr Clinton or Mr Dole. Included in Letterman's list of the "Top Ten Highlights" of Mr Dole's recent appearance on CNN's *Larry King Live* were: "Bob pulled out his teeth and made them chitter on Larry's desk"; "Bob kept snapping Larry's suspenders and barking, 'Stay awake, punk!'; "While attempting to smile Bob sprained his face."

A Swiss company has announced that it is now making

100 per cent safe breast implants

made from vegetable oil," began Leno of NBC. "That is going to take a lot of will power for Clinton to pass up, don't you think? I mean, a woman with large breasts who smells like a French fry?"

Leno managed there to wrap out David Letterman, Jay Leno or Conan O'Brien — television hosts who enjoy almost as much name recognition as the two candidates — venturing a wisecrack about Mr Clinton or Mr Dole. Included in Letterman's list of the "Top Ten Highlights" of Mr Dole's recent appearance on CNN's *Larry King Live* were: "Bob pulled out his teeth and made them chitter on Larry's desk"; "Bob kept snapping Larry's suspenders and barking, 'Stay awake, punk!'; "While attempting to smile Bob sprained his face."

Funny or not, there is no

doubting the impact television humour will have on an election whose outcome, given the candidates' failure so far to demarcate clear positions on the issues, is expected to depend on the "character" question. According to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 25 per cent of American adults, and 40 per cent of those under 30, said that television humour would influence their electoral choices.

So far Mr Clinton is way ahead of Mr Dole in the opinion polls. A poll published yesterday by *USA Today* merely confirmed the findings of three polls last week that Mr Clinton is a clear 20 percentage points ahead. In terms of the humour index, this would suggest that the people polled are more comfortable with the idea of a likeable young boulder in the White House than with a venerable old bumbler.

Also acting against Mr Dole — and this may change as the campaign wears on — is the fact that most of the Clinton jokes have been done before whereas, the Kansas senator being newer on the presidential scene, Dole jokes provide a richer vein for the humourists to tap.

Worst of all for Mr Dole, in

a country where winning is everything and voters do not like to be associated with a loser, more and more jokes are beginning to appear that make fun of his plummeting ratings.

Mr Clinton is laughing now. But the tide may turn, especially if more White House scandals emerge of the type that prompted this Letterman joke in his "Top ten surprises in the OJ Simpson video: number five: the revelation that the gloves are Hillary's size."

I say, I say ...

Letterman, CBS: "A Japanese inventor has developed a robot that can simulate five human facial expressions. Now, I know you're saying to yourself, 'that's three more than Bob Dole can make'."

Conan O'Brien, NBC: "I don't know how we got hold of this ... written by the psychiatrist who treats Bob Dole. Take a look at this note, it says, 'Earliest childhood memory, father carried away by pterodactyl'."

Letterman: "Steve Forbes, the wacky billionaire, finished second, and he said, 'Well, the problem is I just could not compete with the Bob Dole machine'. And I'm thinking, what is that? Respirator or dialysis?"

Letterman, again, on Mr Dole's *Larry King* performances: "The show was apparently a huge success. Everything went great for him. It was so successful, in fact, Dole only dropped eight points in the polls."

Whatever new directions the television jokes take, one thing for sure is that they will continue to proliferate all the way up to polling day on 5 November. They are likely to have at least as much influence as the state of the economy and US foreign relations in determining who will lead of the world's most powerful nation into the next century.

Burmese junta comes in from the cold

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY
Jakarta

"It's hard to find an equivalent," said the European official at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) yesterday, "but try to imagine ... the European Union taking on Libya as a member. Even Radovan Karadzic has had to step down — but here they are, welcoming Burma."

The official documents made little mention of it (the chairman's closing statement acknowledged nothing more than "some divergence of views on the subjects discussed"). But the third ARF meeting in Jakarta yesterday was dominated by discussion of Burma, and the future of its military junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The host country, Indonesia, seems to have been hoping to avoid the subject altogether. The Western representatives, led by the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, insisted, and the result was an uneasy stand-off which leaves it unclear whether the SLORC has gained or lost from its controversial presence in Jakarta this week.

The seven members of the Association of South-East Asian States (ASEAN) appear to be sharply divided from their Western partners on the question of Burma. ASEAN favours what it calls "constructive engagement" with Rangoon, and this week received Burma as an observer member. Non-Asian members of ARF, including the EU, US and Australia, have criticised this approach, especially since last month, when an honorary consul for several Scandinavian countries died in custody in Rangoon.

Even in public, the facade of harmony among the partners has been strained. "The countries of the West want multiparty democracy," said Ali Alatas, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, and chair of the Forum, "but all the countries of the world want to encourage democratisation ... Don't dictate to us that only a Westminster-style system of government is ac-

ceptable, or only an American system is acceptable. That is intellectual arrogance."

Matters came to a head at an informal dinner for ARF participants on Monday night. The Burmese were not present, and Warren Christopher persuaded Mr Alatas to raise the subject at the following day's conference, in the presence of the Burmese Foreign Minister, Oun Gyaw. "It was definitely a humiliation," said a European official. "He had to sit there while his host conveyed criticisms of his country's human rights record and internal policies."

According to American and European diplomats, ASEAN states may be less delighted at Burma's admission to their ranks. Some, including the Philippines, with its own recent memory of overthrowing an oppressive regime, are embarrassed by Rangoon's record.

The admission of an economy as feeble as Burma's also creates difficulties in applying uniform standards. But, with other poor members of the ARF — Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia — it acts as a crucial geographical buffer against China.

"All of the ASEAN members

have human rights problems," said the European official.

"When they speak out against

sanctions, and talk about dif-

ferent kinds of democracy, they

are protecting themselves."

The danger lies in an East-

West split within the ARF, es-

pecially if the SLORC does

launch a crackdown against the

democracy movement led by

Aung San Suu Kyi.

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I say, I say...

THE INDEPENDENT Summer of sport

Wednesday 24 July 1996

Sublime or ridiculous? Welcome to the Olympics of the absurd

Beach volleyball
day one:
Mike Rowbottom
sees a new sport
make its debut


You are part of history," the announcer told the 15,000 or so sunstruck spectators at Atlanta Beach yesterday. "This is Olympic beach volleyball." No one seemed quite sure how to react to this news, and there followed a short excerpt from Johnny B Goode.

Like rock and roll music, beach volleyball has been gathered into the embrace of the Establishment. The sport which originated on the beaches of California in the 1930s, and which boomed as a fun pursuit for a generation of camper van-inhabiting hippies in the 1960s, has now given itself over to the International Olympic Committee.

But if it has lost something through that, those present at this man-made beach 300 miles from any ocean seemed more than happy about the counterbalancing gains.

The modern Olympics has included and discarded many odd activities in 100-year span: sports like the 14th stone throw, the standing triple jump and even, intriguingly, the javelin (both hands).

How long beach volleyball - which has been described as Baywatch with rules - will remain within the Olympic realm is open to question. But, given their beach culture, the Australians are hardly likely to refuse it space in the 2000 Sydney Games. And the Americans are certainly enjoying it.

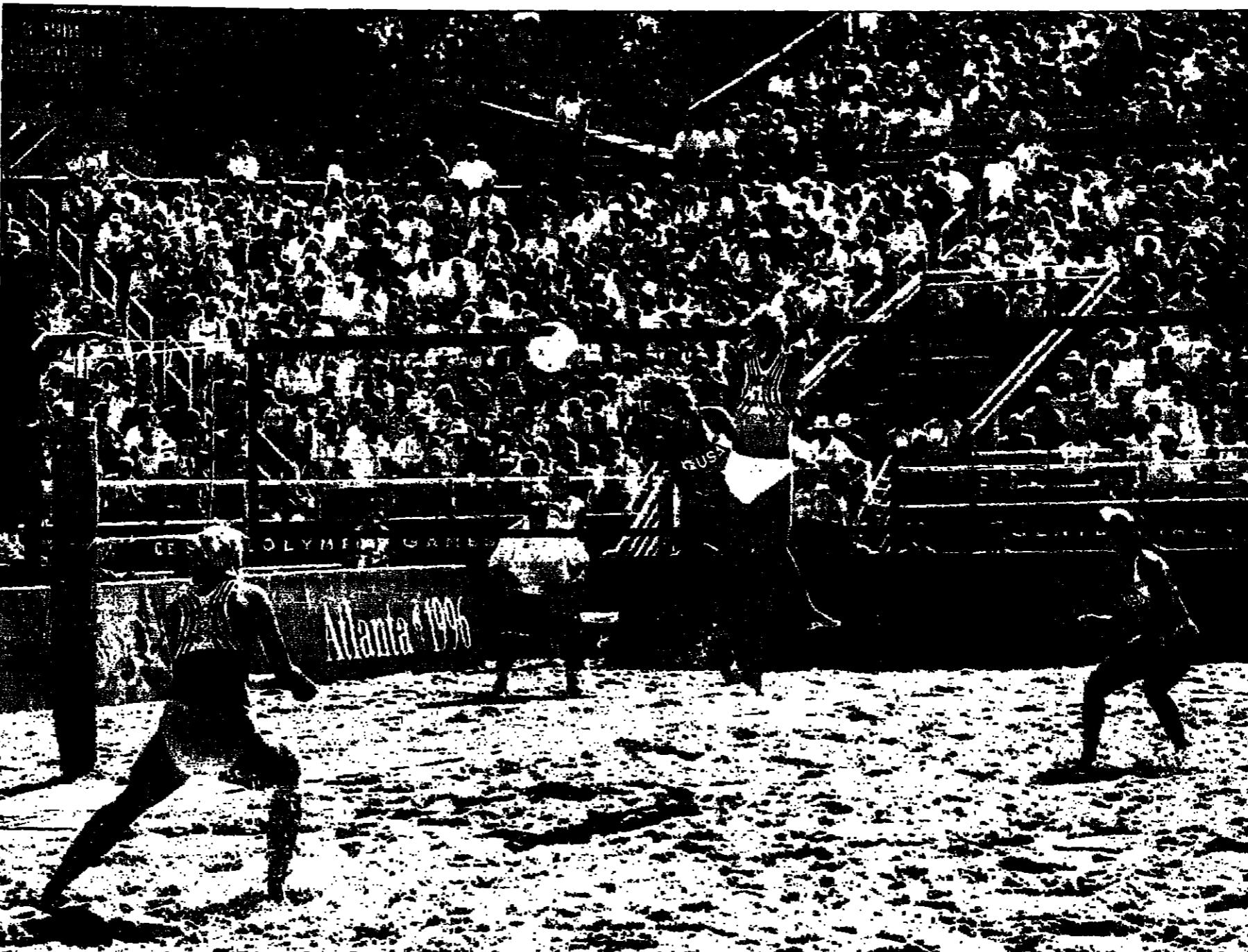
Beach volleyball's inclusion in the Olympics has everything to do with its popularity in the United States, as reflected, inevitably, in television ratings. The most recent figures available from the host broadcasters, NBC, assign domestic showings of beach volleyball a rating of 2.0, with one point representing 959,000 homes. Given that the sacred sport of basketball rates 5.3, beach volleyball is not surprisingly described by an NBC spokesman as "a regular staple of our coverage".

And just to make sure that the host nation was thoroughly happy with the arrangements, an extra team place was allocated to them in their capacity as host nation.

Gail Castro, one of the six US women competing yesterday, underlined the point. "TV was where we made our big jump in this event," she said. "Once we got TV, the big sponsors wanted to come in and... well," she concluded with a grin, "money."

Money. Most of the teams here had it. The top players in the women's game, US and Brazilian, can earn between \$300,000 and \$500,000 a year. The Americans, Brazilians, Dutch, German are all professional. Which leaves the Brits.

Encouraged by a group of friends and relatives holding the charmingly restrained banner "Go! Go! And & Mol!", Britain's pairing of Amanda Glover, a 26-year-old supervisor at the Britannia Leisure Centre in Hackney, and 31-year-old Audrey



Baywatch with rules: Norway's beach volleyball team face up to the United States in 110F heat at Atlanta Beach yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

Cooper, a publicity officer with Racial Electronics, held the top Australian pairing for nearly 20 minutes before sliding to a 15-4 defeat.

Afterwards they reflected on the usual problems which British competitors encounter in many sports - difficulties in finding lack of indoor facilities. But they were adamant that their sport deserved its place in the Games. Challenged as to what response they would make to those who did not, they chanted, in almost perfect unison: "Come and see it."

Many people did so yesterday. The appeal of the sport lies in its simple mixture of athleticism, sunshine and sex.

Bronzed, worked-out bodies were everywhere yesterday in an atmosphere that was somewhere between a tennis tournament and a beach party. Sunglasses - Raybans and

Killer Loop - were de rigueur. The behaviour of the competitors on court is as uniform as their own skimpy dress code. They dive and high-five, churning the playing surface into ru-

ined sandcastles and invariably touching hands between points, win or lose, as if for reassurance.

With four fewer people than an indoor volleyball team, the sense of mutual dependency in this sport is exaggerated. Curiously, however, two of the medal favourites - the top US pair of Nancy Reno and Holly McPeak, and the Brazilian world champions Jackie Silva and Sandra Pires - have been riven by arguments in recent weeks. Reno, a staunch feminist, reportedly objected to her partner having a breast enlargement operation, and had to be persuaded not to break up the pairing.

For all the divergence in financial resources evident here, what players have in common was also glaringly obvious - the heat of the sun, which yesterday raised temperatures on court into the 100s. The lingering problem of sand, too, is something held in common. "Three months after a tournament you can still find sand coming out of your ears," Castro said. "It's the weirdest thing."

The audience response to this sweaty activity yielded some interesting international variation. The British clapped daringly, the Americans whistled, and the Brazilians, led by a trumpet and a man with huge green and yellow gloves, chanted to a sequence of beguiling rhythms. Meanwhile, behind the stands, America's holy trinity of Coke, McDonalds and Budweiser did their steady business.

Whether it accorded with the spirit of the Olympics - who knows. The spirit of the place, at any rate, was summed up in a uniquely Californian way by one of the US team, Barbara Fontana Harris. "I think," she said, "that the energy in the air is just more celebration and a more powerful definition of locality. And that's great."

Which, in a way, said it all.

Tennis day one:
Norman Fox sees
the world of
Agassi and Nike in
an unlikely setting

The taking part more important than the winning? As John McEnroe famously remarked: "You can't be serious."

The Olympic tennis tournament got under way yesterday and Andre Agassi is in no doubt where his priorities lie. "I always wanted to compete in the Olympics," he said. "This is as big as any grand slam tournament, except I don't get paid."

Not much anyway. Agassi's Nike contract is a moveable feast which keeps adding his \$150m fortune, no matter how badly he plays.

While Agassi may not have entered into the spirit of things by staying in the Olympic village - a luxury hotel is more his style - others from the multi-million dollar world of tennis have taken a different attitude.

Monica Seles is "stunning" it in the village and loving every minute of it. She said: "I've been getting excited about being here for almost two years. I wanted to stay in the village to get the full Olympic experience."

As she was talking, other competitors were taking her picture. She promptly found her own camera and took pictures of them. She has hooked up with Lindsay Davenport and Chanda Rubin, and two members of the American water polo team.

"I'd never met them until the opening ceremony," she said. "You just get talking to everyone here. After the ceremony the three of us went out into the town and sat drinking coffee until 3am."

Agassi said that one of the main reasons he wanted to compete in the Games was because his father, Mike, boxed for Iran in the Olympics of 1948 and 1952. "He's prouder of me for coming here than any other thing I've done so far," Agassi said.

He staunchly defends the right of tennis to be an Olympic sport.

"There's plenty of people here who are real amateurs, but look at the Dream Team - look at the top athletes. Everything has changed." Even so, letting millionaires into the Games has still driven the whole Olympic ethic way beyond the baseline.

Tennis, however, could be said to have more of an historical right to be in the Games than, say, beach volleyball or mountain biking. After all, it was in the 1896 Olympics in Athens, though hardly seriously: a passing British tourist, John Pius Boland, heard about it by chance and entered. He won the gold medal.

Tennis came back into the Olympic movement only eight years ago with massive criticism about its ultra-professionalism. The argument might have rung true 30 years before, but not after several decades of phoney amateurism, particularly in athletics.

The IOC welcomed tennis for commercial reasons and were delighted when Goran Ivanisevic and Stevan Edberg were their country's flag bearers in Barcelona. Whether the Olympics has sold its soul is of little interest to Agassi, but with a number of the big names having pulled out before the Games had begun, he has found himself a comparatively lone flag-bearer for his sport here.

Heaman wins, page 3

STRANGE OLYMPIC SPORTS - PAST AND PRESENT

The past

KORFBALL: A variation of croquet, played on a hard-surfaced court with a raised border that can be used for bank shots. Played by teams comprising six men and six women, korfball is particularly popular in the Netherlands and Germany.

STONE THROW: Held in the 1906 Games in Athens, where the American favourite, James Mitchel, was unable to compete due to a dislocated shoulder sustained when the US team's ship was hit by a large wave.

TUG OF WAR: The first team to pull the other team six feet was declared the winner. In 1900, the US team took part in a "friendly" tug, which broke up when American spectators decided to join in.

The present

PELOTA: Also known as *jal alai*; originated from the Basque region of Spain. Played with a basket strapped to the hand, with the aim of not allowing the other player to return the ball. Demo sport in 1924 Olympics and also appeared in Mexico 1968.

RACQUETS: Similar to real tennis, featured only in the 1908 Games, where Britain gained all three medals in the doubles event.

The present

RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS: Hoops, hoops, ribbons and music. But a sport?

SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING: More music, which appears to accompany a competition for fixed smiles among teenage girls.

Information on past sports: Olympic '96 magazine

'I even heard it alleged, by a Pakistani player, that it wasn't unusual for all the umpires to be rounded up before a home series and coerced into giving Pakistan favourable decisions'

DEREK PRINGLE explains the special tension when England play Pakistan at Test cricket - Page 4

Britain's swimmers cross Atlantic in 8 hours 55 minutes.

The British Olympic team flew to Atlanta with Delta Air Lines. But then, we do have more flights there than anyone else. **Delta** Air Lines



Hidden Personality
Business ventures have not been huge hits. She once made £30,000 out of someone else's risk-taking, taking a newspaper to court over allegations she stole another woman's husband.



olympic games 3

Smith's perfect riposte

Guy Hodgson on American attempts to discredit another superb display from a popular Irish swimmer

If you had asked beforehand who would become a figure of rampant conjecture in the opening week of the Olympics, not many people would have plumped for a 26-year-old Irish woman. A Chinese girl, maybe, or perhaps a weightlifter sent home for steroid abuse, but a red-haired unknown from just outside Dublin?

By even the harshest, temper-testing standards of the Atlanta Games, Monday was an extraordinary day in the life of a hitherto nobody. At 3am Irish officials were still arguing Michelle Smith's rights to swim in the 400 metres freestyle, 17 hours later she had won her second gold medal in three days.

In between Janet Evans, an American icon so unsullied she had been chosen to carry the Olympic torch in the opening ceremony, had flung in a verbal hand-grenade. Was Smith on drugs? "If you're asking are the accusations out there, 'the four-times gold medallist' had replied, "I would say yes they are."

Coming on top of the Americans' attempt to have Smith excluded because of a mix-up in entry times dates originating in Atlanta, the furor propelled Ireland's latest sporting heroine to the top of the Olympic agenda.



Perfect timing: Michelle Smith celebrates her second gold medal after Monday's 400 metres freestyle race

Photograph: John Giles/PA

It left Smith bemused but calm. Indeed, in the press conference after the freestyle, she gave a near faultless performance and many doubters were swayed over by her simple plea of innocence. "I put my heart and soul into this," she pleaded. "All I do is eat, sleep and train and this is the culmination of it all. It's the result of hard work, that's all."

It was evident where the chasm in belief lay. The Americans, long since scorchers of fairy stories, looked at Smith's improvement from an also-swan in Barcelona to a champion and were sceptical. Most of the rest of the world, perhaps spurred by a chance to get back at the hosts for a chaotic Games, lined up on the other side.

One Australian journalist described the American attitude as "ungracious" and the Canadian assistant coach, Deryk Snelling, who has worked with Smith, warned: "I've never seen a tougher girl. I'd be very careful about saying she's doing anything illegal."

The Irish, meanwhile, are furious that she is being questioned.

Smith's father, Brian, said he was disgusted about what Evans had said about his daughter. "I looked up to her," he said. "I thought she was one of America's national trea-

sures. To lower herself in that manner is beneath her as a gold medallist."

At least the consensus-splitting subject of the controversy stayed above the simmering arguments, merely saying that she had been disappointed by Evans's comments. "To my fellow competitors in Europe my success is not a surprise," Smith said.

"It's playing fair if you are trying to disqualify a competitor."

In the freestyle final Smith was aware the Americans had attempted to have her excluded, but the drugs comments had been kept away from her. Unfettered by this latter worry, her race was a commanding one. She took the lead half-way through and never looked likely to be caught. Her time, 2min 7.25sec, was the fastest in the world this year.

"In the Olympics," she said, "there's supposed to be a spirit of fair play and I don't think it's playing fair if you are trying to disqualify a competitor."

Asked about the questions about drugs, she pointed out she had been tested four times in May and June alone, including once when she was leaving a television studio in Ireland after giving an interview. "My an-

swer is: look at my drug tests," she said.

"I think it would be really stupid of me to take drugs. When you're in the top 20 you're subject to testing at any time. I was sitting at home at 9 o'clock one

Sunday morning when the Fina people [from swimming's governing body] came to my house looking for a urine sample."

Just once Smith's serenity faltered and that followed a question about her husband, Eric de Bruin, a Dutch discus thrower,

and his bar for taking steroids. "I just want to talk about my swimming," she said, her face hardening. The change, the edge in her voice, endorsed her previous easy denials rather than undermined them.

She should worry. Smith needed only to look at NBC's prime-time television coverage to see she had landed the perfect retort. Surrounding her on Monday night there were advertisements for a truck endorsed by a person who had missed out on the final. That person was Janet Evans.

Britons have not exactly been making scorch marks in the Olympic pool this week but even in this underwhelming atmosphere the performance in the men's 100 metres backstroke would have had the national coaches tearing their hair out in Atlanta yesterday.

In Neil Willey and Martin Harris, Britain had the third and sixth fastest men in the world this year, yet those performances looked totally misleading when they failed to reach the final. Not by a small way either, but by a margin as big as the question mark over the team's preparation.

Willey, a silver medallist in the World Short Course Championships last year, finished a dismal fifth in his heat with a time of 56.27sec, more than a second slower than his personal best. Harris, the British record holder, was even worse with 57.17 and finished 26th overall.

"I don't know what was wrong," Willey said. "I wasn't ready mentally or physically. I have to sit down with my coach and work it out." Asked about the build-up, he pretered to keep his counsel.

The male backstroke swimmers were not alone in their disappointment. Caroline Foot, at 31 the second-oldest swimmer ever to compete for Britain at the Olympics, was more than a second outside her best with 1:03.04 in the 100m butterfly, while Marie Hardiman finished sixth in her 200m breaststroke and

his bar for taking steroids.

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However, the air of gloom is putting Paul Palmer's efforts into a better light.

Yesterday, the 21-year-old from Lincoln made it to his third final of the Games when he was sixth fastest in the heats for the 400m freestyle.

Palmer was outside his own record, but his time of 3:51.98 was good enough to see off the American Tom Dolan, gold medallist in the 400m individual medley. A finalist in the 200m and the 4x200m relay, Palmer was behind Dolan for the first half of the race but overtook him in the third 100 metres to finish second behind New Zealand's Danyon Loader. Dolan, ultimately, finished fourth in 3:52.91.

South Africa's Penelope Heynes, meanwhile, is cutting through records. Having set a world mark for the 100m breaststroke on Sunday, she added an Olympic record for the 200m breaststroke with 2:26.63.

SCARLET FACES IN ATLANTA

Yesterday's Olympic-bloomers

The fickle mood swings of the Olympic results computer were driving journalists crazy again yesterday.

The multi-million dollar results system began the day in 'benign' mood. First it awarded a track cycling world record to the Australian Bradley McEwan and then, in a spirit of Olympic generosity, delivered the same accolade to Denmark's Jan Bo Petersen. The track cycling begins today.

But then it got its tykes in a tangle, turned nasty and spluttered out a wispily misleading fencing result.

Hungary beat Spain in the semi-finals of the men's team epee event, it said. Wrong, both Hungary and Spain had been eliminated in the quarter-finals about an hour earlier.

The most bizarre lapse was awarding Asian records to all 36 weightlifters in Monday's 64kg snatch section. The lucky lifters included 10 Europeans, five Latin Americans, two from the United States and one each from Africa and Canada.

Even more fortunate were Tony Aneau of the Solomon Islands and Wang Guohua of China. According to the results, they failed to register a lift. But, what the heck, they got Asian records too.

Lots of legwork: how Michelle shocked the world

Alan Murdoch explains why back home in Ireland Michelle Smith's success is attributed to hard work and improved technique

Irish swimming insiders were yesterday emphatic in rejecting American suggestions that Michelle Smith's emergence as an Olympic champion was either sudden or unnatural for a woman of 26 - well above the average age of Atlanta finalists.

Instead, in Ireland the Atlanta innuendos were being denied as inevitable recriminations from a country unable to accept that its own star Janet Evans had been convincingly killed off by the ultra-determined Smith's fitness and superior technique.

Chalkie White, the former national swimming champion and sports writer, yesterday countered the argument that Smith could not have notched up an 18-second improvement on 1992 times in her 400m individual medley on Saturday by normal methods.

Smith's pathfinder, Ian Stark, was improving all the time on Stanwick Ghost when the grey missed his footing coming out of the first water. It was then impossible to jump the rails which followed and he put his feet in a ditch, pitching Stark over the fence. The pair continued so the team riders following could benefit from Stark's advice.

William Fox-Pitt, however, had an unfortunate refusal at the

end of the race.

Australia go clear as Britain slip up

The Australian three-day event team, riding with an impressive blend of dash and skill, galloped to a 61 points lead after the speed and endurance test yesterday.

Only sixth after the dressage, they overhauled the leaders, the United States, and left their rivals New Zealand in third followed by France and Ireland with the British team a disappointing sixth.

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end of the race.

Henman scrapes through

TENNIS
By Philip Nickson

Tim Henman lifted the hearts of Britain's Olympic troops as he reached the second round of the men's singles yesterday.

Henman, Britain's first Winter-Bledorn men's singles quarter-finalist since 1973, looked in real trouble during tens and error-strewn first set against Japan's Shuzo Matsukata at Stone Mountain.

The 300-plus Union Jack-waving British fans, desperate for something to cheer after three days to forget, watched anxiously as the 21-year-old Henman baked in the searing 100F heat and struggled to get his game together.

Drama became crisis when Henman's second serve on set point against him at 5-6 appeared to be out. It was called by the line judge, but he immediately corrected himself which meant Henman had first serve again.

And the Oxfordshire man, now at his best ever world ranking of No 37, took advantage to win the point and hold serve before taking the tie-break and 11 successive points at the start of the second set on his way to a 7-6 (7-4) 6-3 win in 1hr 22min.

"The first set was crucial and, while I'm not saying it was the turning point, it was certainly a big one," Henman said.

The three-man Solings, two-man Star and the Finn single-handers completed a race before diving for cover under a white storm which had many worrying they would be hit by lightning. The Tornado catamarans were on the last leg of their race when it was abandoned because the wind direction swung through 180 deg-

Sad Bell fails in final quest



JUDO

By Philip Nickson

should have been another stepping stone to higher things - after all, only two months ago Bell beat Yaneisy Alvarez of Spain in the European championships.

However, the more the four-minute contest progressed, the less Bell looked in command.

"I didn't know what was the matter with me," Bell said. "I have been training for this one event for four years. I felt that I could think about what to do, but I couldn't do it."

Bell went ahead on attacks, though a small score

could have swung the match. In the closing seconds, it was the Spaniard who put the result beyond reach with a leg-grab for seven points.

Bell was outside the mat when Alvarez executed her winning throw. "I thought I'd got far enough off the mat, but obviously I hadn't and I relaxed. And the referee counted it."

Bell, who had to be comforted by her coach when she broke down in tears afterwards, was beaten in the final round.

"It was hard to get back after that. I just didn't get into the fight. I was thinking about what I was going to do and doing it twice or three seconds later. At this level you cannot do that. I think I might just have edged it if it hadn't been for the throw."

"When I beat her in May I

absolutely battered her. I threw her and strangled her. I don't know if I was over-confident going in there. Perhaps I was a bit too cagey and she took advantage of it."

With Alvarez being thrown and held by the Netherlands' Jenny Gal in the next round, Bell was out of the competition.

"I have said that I will be available for the European team championships if I am required, but then I will think seriously if I will continue," Bell said.

In the men's light middleweight division, Graeme Randall, the 21-year-old from Edinburgh, was eliminated in the first round by Shay-Ore Smadja, of Israel, with a powerful footsweep.

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The winner was America's Jeff Madrigali, who sailed extra distance looking for stronger wind under the cloud of the approaching storm. He found it and went from ninth to first. "It was a brave call," Stead said.

The best result of the day for Britain came in the Solings,

where Andy Beadsworth, Barry Parkin and Adrian Stead took no chances. They were seventh at the end of the first leg and seventh at the finish. "Our race was fine," Stead said. "We were only ever on the fringes of the storm during the race, and that was on the first run. It was on the way home that we were hit by the heads of the storm. Still, it was a good opener, a reasonable start, and something to build on."

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Little shelter from the storms



SAILING

By Stuart Alexander

With only three of the 16 scheduled races completed on the opening day of the sailing regatta, the pop-up storm conditions that are a feature of the sultry Savannah climate created havoc for the organisers afloat. And the organisation ashore continued to draw the sort of criticism that has threatened to overshadow the efforts of the athletes.

The three-man Solings, two-man Star and the Finn single-handers completed a race before diving for cover under a white storm which had many worrying they would be hit by lightning. The Tornado catamarans were on the last leg of their race when it was abandoned because the wind direction swung through 180 deg-

rees - not the steady race track which is required.

The other four classes, Lasers and Europeans, and men's and women's windsurfers, were already battened down on the floating barges which make up the day marina. The board-sailing men took matters into their own hands after hanging around for an hour. They picked up their sails and went home, dictating their wishes to the race officer.

The best result of the day for Britain came in the Solings,

The Canadian Ross Mac Donald won the Star race only to be disqualified on a protest from the defending gold medalist, the American Mark Reynolds, that he had not been given proper room rounding a mark. That moved Torben Graef, of Brazil, up to No 1, and the 1992 silver medalist Rod Davis, of New Zealand, to second, and Reynolds up from fourth to third.

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The best result of the day for Britain

4 the cricket page

Hidden Personality
And she gets to play in perfume - a sort of female Frank Bruno, if that is not an insult. The Fairy Godmother at Lewisham was her latest triumph.

The special tensions of England v Pakistan



Tomorrow will see the renewal of hostilities between two countries with an acrimonious past. **Derek Pringle** has experienced it all

Every sport, wherever and whenever it has been played, has always had its rivals and grudge matches. Over the last 20 years, England's cricketers would have seen Australia and the West Indies as the most desirable teams to beat, with Pakistan the side most likely to get the blood bubbling. But if the former remain on the healthy side of competition, the latter has been filled with acrimony as old prejudices surface.

In the case of England and Pakistan, the reasons are complex and have a history which, if not exactly ancient, certainly goes back to the partition of India in 1947, and to the painful birth of the new nation state of Pakistan, since when a million uprootings and mass migration have kept its proud people on the boil.

Its cricketers, too, have rarely ever sinned in their bid to bring wider recognition to their country and themselves. It is what makes them more serious and hot-headed than their neighbours in India, who look upon them as a weary senior citizen might quizzically gaze upon a pertulant child.

Representing a country devoted to Islam and one that takes its cricket almost as seriously as a weighty responsibility and not one for the faint of heart.

To recall the widespread outrage when Pakistan lost to India in the quarter-final of the recent World Cup - Wasim Akram and several other players had effigies of them buried and their houses stoned - is to realise that winning is of overriding national importance.

But if winning is important generally, it is virtually compulsory at home, where politicians and those who run cricket need the necessary diversions as they lurch from one public scandal to the next. But even the most downtrodden can spot a subterfuge, and all but two of England's eight tours there have been interrupted by political riots.

On one occasion, the Lahore Test of 1977-78 was interrupted on two successive days, as Benazir Bhutto and supporters of her father, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, came to confront General Zia, who had recently deposed and incarcerated him. In Pakistan, sport is politics and the infrastructure around cricket has often been more viperish, and possessed more

hidden agendas, than the most convoluted of John Le Carré's plots.

During the 1987 World Cup, Gra-

ham Gooch was invited to a prominent former Pakistan player's house for dinner. However, once a hasty meal had been eaten, it became clear that there was a political angle to the evening, and Gooch was asked why England had not complained about the appointment of the then manager of the Pakistan team, the ex-player in question clearly wanting him out of the way. Such chicanery, whilst amusing to many, later led Gooch to comment that captaining England seemed a doddle in comparison.

It is not surprising, then, that win-

ning by all means necessary has be-

come a way of life in Pakistan. It is

a necessity that gave rise to the re-

cent phenomenon of reverse swing,

which although sporadically ac-

hieved legally can be virtually guaran-

teed when the ball is tampered with.

As a discovery, it is touched with ge-

nious, but unlike picking the seam and

shining the ball with lip balm, it has

roughed up the level playing field to

such an extent that it cannot, like the

others, simply be ignored.

begins to reverse swing, the

wickets start to clatter and the

toes begin to bruise.

For the opposition, it is not

good news at all. When the

bowlers get as much lateral

movement as Wasim and Wa-

qar, the batting side need to do

some lateral thinking. This, by

definition, is not something

that comes naturally to any of

us, least of all professional

cricketers.

If any lateral thought went

into England's selection

for Lord's, it was not discernible to the naked eye

If any lateral thought went into England's selection for Lord's, it was not discernible to the naked eye

Pakistan's opening bowlers, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, have been described in the past few days as the best new-ball pairing in the world. If these were true, they might not be dangerous.

The best new-ball pair in the world are surely Curly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh, of the West Indies. The second-best are probably Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock, of South Africa. Wasim and Waqar come in third (though you could make a case without being entirely facetious, for Glenn McGrath and Paul Reiffel, the deceptively effective Australians).

It is not that the two Paki-
stanis are not great fast bowlers. It is just that their distinguishing feature is an ability to bowl better with the old ball than the new ball. This turns the game on its head. For the spectator, it is excellent news. Those sleepy afternoons when the score is 200 for two are transformed into the sort of setting you find in the films of David Lynch, where every bright surface is just a portent of darkness, and any sense of security is a false one. Each boundary the umpire signals just brings the moment nearer when the ball

and there were two dull draws, in the first and third Tests. Pakistan won the second and fifth, and England won the fourth - at Headingley, where any old scamer can be a world-beater.

On the scorecards for those three Tests you can almost see the moment when the reverse swinging started. At Lord's, England subsided from 197 for three to 255 all out in the first innings, and then from 108 for two to 175 all out. At Headingley, 270 for one became 320 all out. At the Oval, 138 for two became 207 all out, and 153 for five became 174 all out.

The contribution made by

England's bottom six in those

matches went like this: 65 runs

for 11 times out; two (yes, two) for six; and 48 for 11.

Grand total: 115 runs from 28

completed innings. And just

two not outs because the only

players who could cope with

their homework. Last time

England played Pakistan was in

1992. The Pakistan line-up now

is remarkably similar to what it

was then. When it comes to a

Test series in England, they

have been here and won that.

What swung it for them was

a single factor: Wasim and

Waqar's proficiency with the old

ball. It was a five-match series

as you are. After all the

years of chopping and chang-

ing, this is good to see. Or is it?

Pakistan pose a threat unlike

that of any other country - espe-

cially India, who bowled well,

if too short, with the new ball

and then fell away easily.

Mike Atherton and David

Lloyd know all there is to know

about Wasim, and Alec Stew-

art, who is still technically, Eng-

land's vice-captain, yields to no

one in his knowledge of Waqar.

But I wonder if they have done

as well as their homework. Last time

England played Pakistan was in

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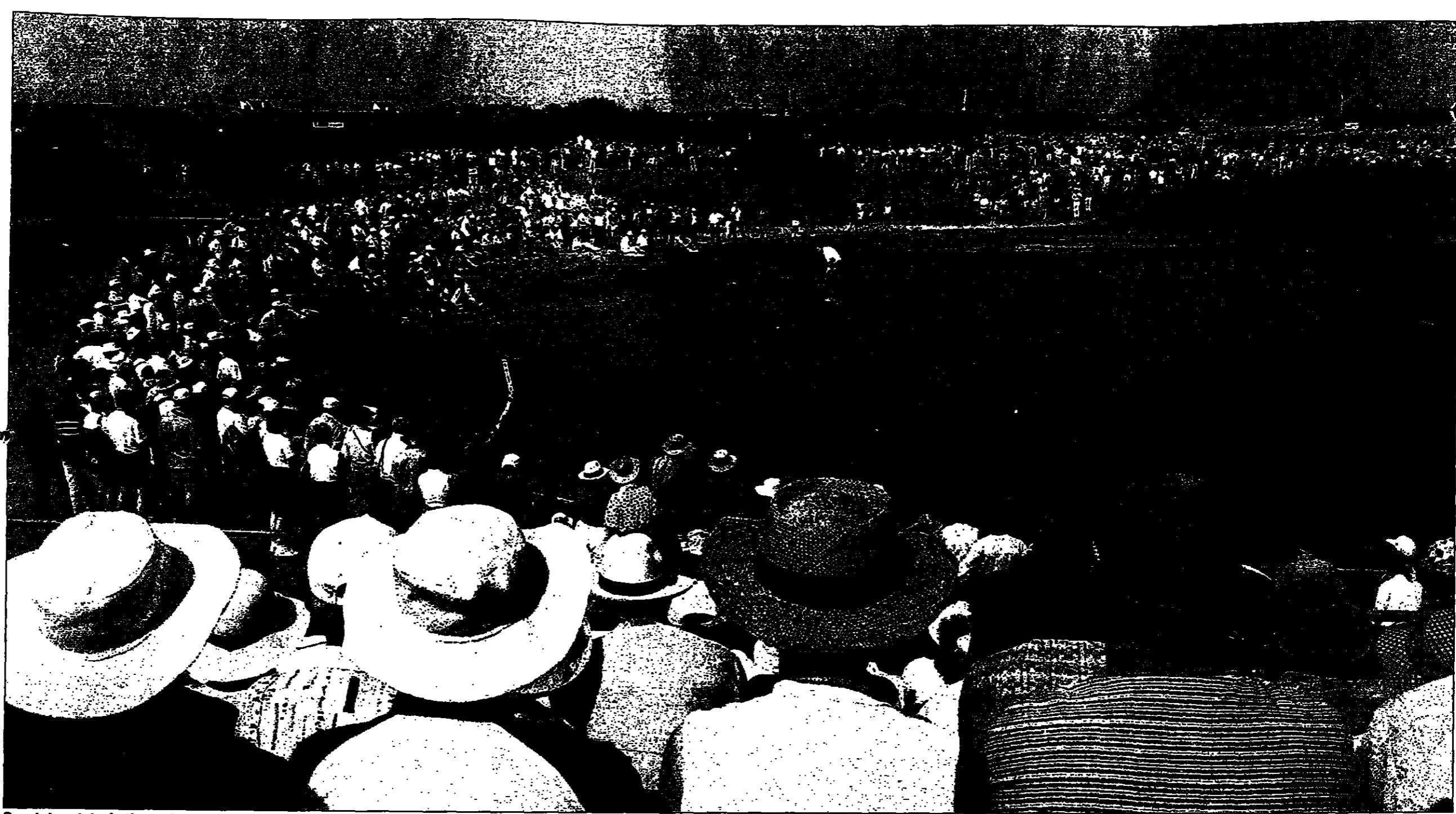
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Spectators take in the action on the sixth green at Royal Lytham: You needed factor 15 sun block, a wide-brimmed hat and, above all, you needed to bring imagination

Photograph: Robert Hallam

The Greatest Golf Show on Earth

Just as Phineas Taylor Barnum merged with Bailey to produce the "Greatest Show on Earth", there must have been a Mr Royal who teamed up with a Mr Ancient with another kind of circus in mind. While not actually kitted out in top hat, tails and a whip to tame the badly behaved, the ringmaster of the R&A's annual show, Michael Bonallack, must have mentally stood outside the gates of Royal Lytham and St Annes last week and shouted for all he was worth, "Roll up, roll up. Come inside, for a mere £22, and watch men weep as they perform feats of magic. Roll up, roll up, to our tested shopping mall, where we will make your money disappear." Just like the show with clowns, elephants and a high wire, it's damn difficult to resist.

You needed factor 15 block at Lytham this year as the sun decided to turn its thermostat up full. You needed a wide-brimmed hat. And, above all, you needed to bring imagination. Barnum at least had the vision to put all his acts inside a ring with the audience seated around the show. In his circus tent you never heard people say, "Who is that clown? What ring is he playing? How did he do yesterday? I can't see, did he manage to avoid that custard pie hazard? His partner, where is that other clown from? Was that applause? Did he pull that joke off? I can't see. How much money do you think he gets for using that red nose?"

Mr Barnum, sorry, I mean Mr Bonallack, knows you need imagination to come to his circus. Just to let you know you're going to the "latest, greatest show on earth", the road signs of "Open Golf" directing the audience to Lytham, near Blackpool, seem to start around Watford (and probably Inverness). The car parking system has more castes than Hindoo; the Brahman priests and scholars are directed to car park A; the Kshatriyas, the mil-

itary and rulers, are also in A. The Vaishyas, the farmers and merchants, are directed to park B. The Sudras, the peasants and labourers, are directed to somewhere near Preston. The untouchables are kept well away from things in a large enclosure known as the press tent.

To help the imagination along, the £4.50 souvenir programme shows a beautiful picture of Royal Lytham's 18th hole and clubhouse. The pil-

If the course is a tapestry of genius, most soon discover they have spent good money to see the threads hanging out the back'

grims who have been to the show before know they must memorise this scene because they will never see anything that looks like it during the four days of performance. There is also a sepia-toned photograph from the Roaring Twenties of men in sweaters, neck ties, plus fours, tunnells and crucially, no audience. Only the Californian circus fans who have spent a decade in self-actualisation ther-

apy can walk round the golf course show rings and pretend nothing has changed from the days of Louise Brooks, Fred Astaire and Bob Jones. Everyone else? Well, they are still looking for this wide open space called the 18th fairway. And where exactly is this place they call the golf course, anyway? If the real course is a tapestry of genius (which it is), most will soon discover they have spent good money to see the threads hanging out the back. It needs imagination to conjure up the view from the front.

Remember the cute view in the programme? Gone. In its place are grandstands, ropes, steel barriers, giant scoreboards, a gigantic television screen that shows the circus as unpolluted and empty as the closing holes of the Royal Gobi Desert Country Club, and enough food and drink tents, vans and kiosks to solve anything the United Nations High Commission for Refugees could throw at them.

The car park caste system invades the course, too: rank (member or day visitor), restriction, hierarchy, status, tribe (blazer or Blackpool beach vest), Bollinger or bitter tent, all reflect golf's obsession with class. Access, however, is the god to be worshipped. Access to walk on the course, behind players, beyond ropes, is given only to players, officials, selected scribes and the high priests and

BEING THERE

Jim Cusick went to see the Open Championship at Royal Lytham, but he ended up at the circus

priestesses, photographers who capture the magic of the circus.

The daily Order of Play is your imagination's guidebook.

"Thursday 18th July, 7.30am. Game Four. Nick Faldo, Robert Allenby, Fuzzy Zoeller."

"Damn, it's... well, it must be 12.08pm because isn't that Brett Ogle teeing off?"

"So, if it's four and half hours a round, if we run to the 18th we'll see Nick coming in."

The words came from the Open Arms bar. The general who said

they had induced frenzy in his troops. They were all armed with plastic milk crates, baseball bats, binoculars, shorts, no socks, sandals and sunstroke. Bad sunstroke, because no one in their right mind runs in 90 degree heat. But this battalion were a rarity. They were fans intent on "seeing" golf. They had been out on the course for hours. The bar was only used to replenish supplies in their assault.

For others, the casuals with the expensive access tag dangling from their Pringle, Lauren or Boss polo shirts, the course and the process of actually seeing golf was a mere passing intrusion as they wined and dined in the corporate hospitality enclosures.

"Where are we again? Is it Lyte Way or Woosnam Way?" said a polo shirt at the Bollinger tent.

"Have you been out there?" asked another polo shirt.

"Nah, got as far as that bit where the 3rd green, the 7th tee, and the 6th green are. Couldn't see a bloody thing. Drink, I need drink. Excuse me, over here!"

To be fair, the Bollinger brigade had done rather well in getting to the 7th tee. En route they would have passed through a maze of ropes marshalled by would-be home secretaries intent on enforcing a harsh regime of law and order.

"Have you left your cattle prod at home, then?" asked an irate polo shirt. "Sorry, sir, I have my orders."

In the middle of a heated exchange that made the Bosnia peace deal look simple, another marshall held up a tall, thin sign above the crowd: "The Open Championship. Stand Still. Quiet." People stood still. People were quiet. If only they had had one of those signs in Northern Ireland a fortnight ago. None of that Orange mess need have got out of hand.

At the 7th tee, you could see, well, something. Men putting, men dri-

They said they saw everything. "Ah, but when it was happening, how much did you understand?" I asked.

Looking as though they had just yomped from Goose Green to Blackpool, and with the plastic milk crates they had used to stand on for a better view almost melting, they admitted: "You just felt it, even if you didn't see it. That's why you come, isn't it?"

Indeed, the milk-crated duo had come to Lytham armed with the Open's most crucial ingredient - imagination. William Shakespeare, as far as I can recall, never mentioned "the golf" in the Scottish play. But he knew about imagination. Next year, above the kiosks where they take the punters' £22 circus entry fee, they should put the words: "Tell me where is fancy bred. Or in the heart or in the head?" Not that they need to be told, of course.

'Frontiersmen' pushing the white-water limits

Close to the sporting soul of white South Africans lies the need to test themselves to the limit. It may be something bred into the Afrikaner psyche since the Voortrekkers were chased from Cape Town over mountain passes and into the country's interior in their ox wagons in the 1780s.

Alternatively, their relish for herculean events may rise from the years of isolation and their banishment from Olympian events. Or it may just be the frontierland machismo. But there is plainly a need to ask searching questions of their character.

Running marathons or canoeing down wild rivers are fine as far as they go. But they don't go far enough for South Africans. There is the Comrades Marathon (a 90km race in sapping heat and humidity); the Dusi (a three-day canoe marathon in the Drakensberg mountains); the Two Oceans Marathon (a 50km run from the Indian to the Atlantic oceans), and the Berg River Canoe Marathon.

The Berg River race is a floating Tour de Western Province. A four-day, 215km paddle through glorious countryside from Paarl in the wine-growing uplands to the rich estuary

and wetlands around Port Owen on the Atlantic. It is billed as an African adventure as much as a race - at the whim of South Africa's mercurial winter weather. When this year's event finished on 13 July, 35 of the 238 entrants had failed to complete it. And this year the Berg behaved itself as the rain and feared north-westerly wind held off.

When the wind blows into the faces of the paddlers, it can sap the strength to the point that exhausted men and women have to be pulled from their K1 kayaks - just kilometres short of the finish, four days of work ripped from them. Torrential rain and snow in the river's headlands can turn the Berg into a pumping beast. Bridges are engulfed and its normal width of 20 to 30 metres can be swollen to 100 metres in the flatter sections or roar up the river banks to submerge trees in the valleys.

A couple of years ago we had a Dutch team here and one of their guys said to me, "We have rivers like this in Holland - except that the trees are on the bank," recalled John Oliver, of the KwaZulu-Natal Canoe Union. It is not a particularly tech-

SPORT IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Andy Colquhoun reports on a canoe trek down a raging river in South Africa

nical race with lots of rapids, but when the river is turbulent and boils and bubbles, it can lead to wrist problems as you try and control the canoe. It is an endurance event on a river that can be a monster. Each 50km stage takes the leader about four hours to complete, with the last person usually home two and a half hours later.

Lee McGregor, a 45-year-old Durban doctor, paddled to fifth place this year as a training partner for his 18-year-old son, Hank, who

finished eighth. Hank is favourite for the junior title at the world canoe marathon championships in Sweden next month. "We arrived down here five days before the race to get used to the river, and at first we were paddling among the leaves on the tops of the trees - that's how high the river was," he said.

"The next day we were down among the branches, the next day among the trunks, and now we're down among the roots - I don't know where the hell I am. You come round a bend and there's a tree straight in front of you. You don't know whether to go left, right or centre."

The event has claimed two lives (in 1983 and 1984) in its 35-year history, since when the sponsors, wine-makers KWV, have tightened up the marathon's safety procedures. The army medical corps provides a mobile unit at the end of each stage. The police patrol the river with two rescue boats and a helicopter circles overhead, doubling as a camera mount for television. A tented village with mobile catering from church groups follows the race, providing competitors with three hot meals a

day for their £20 rand (£35) entry fee. Each night, a camp fire is lit and a mobile disco starts up while a snacks tent and the sponsors' bar tent dispense Dutch courage, free of charge. The competitors' supporters churn up country lanes in the race to the river's infrequent vantage points. At night they sleep in tents, in their cars or campers, or in bunks.

For an unprecedented sixth successive time, this year's race was won by the Yorkshire-born Robbie Herrveld, who moved to Johannesburg with his parents when he was 10. He is one of some 20 full-time canoeists in the race, and each night prefers driving up to 50km to find a hotel bed.

He is nationally renowned, as is Xoloni Mgadi, at least among his Zulu people around Pietermaritzburg. He was one of five development paddlers from KwaZulu-Natal to enter the race under the tutelage of John Oliver, and the only one to finish. Never mind that he was 203rd out of 203 finishers or that it took him 10 hours longer than Herrveld's winning time of 1hr 39min. He is part of a new trek for South Africa.

SPORTING VERNACULAR

No 6 HEATS

of exercise before a big event - what would now be known more temperately as a warm-up.

But there are other meanings, too, which seem to lend extra poetic force to the current usage. Heat has long had a connection with physical excitement, sometimes sexual (to be "on heat") but by no means always. And a "heat" could also mean a single intense exertion; to do something "at a single heat" was to do it in one go, a meaning which probably derives from foundry work, in which a "heat" was the term given to any one of the multiple heating operations applied to the ore. Each successive heat improved the metal, so it isn't entirely fanciful, perhaps, to see some notion of refining or annealing fire preserved in the athletic sense. The term might even be taken as a good example of a linguistic serendipity, with several overlapping usages blending together to create a verbal alloy that is stronger than any one component.

Thomas Sutcliffe

6 olympic games

WEDNESDAY 24 JULY 1996 THE INDEPENDENT SUMMER OF SPORT

Hidden Personality
It was then that she decided, despite being almost 40 (at the time) and with five Olympics behind her, she might still be good enough for another go, planning to raise money for a children's charity into the bargain.

A complete form guide to the

100 metres men



After an up-and-down season, the defending champion, Linford Christie, could as easily finish first as last in the final. Frankie Fredericks - who fancies Christie's chance - and Donovan Bailey are the men to beat.

Records

World 9.85 Leroy Burrell (USA) 1994
Olympic 9.92 Carl Lewis (USA) 1988
British 9.87 Linford Christie 1993
1996 - best times in the world 9.85 Frankie Fredericks (Namibia)
9.92 Ato Boldon (Trinidad)
9.92 Dennis Mitchell (USA)
1996 - bests by British team 10.04 Linford Christie
10.13 Darren Bradford
10.24 Ian Mackie

400m

Michael Johnson, with his ability to maintain his all-around sprinting form, is the man to beat. The world record holder, Butch Reynolds, is his only real rival. Peter Black is good for bronze.

Records

World 43.29 Butch Reynolds (USA) 1988
Olympic 43.50 Quincy Watts (USA) 1992
British 44.37 Roger Black 1996
1996 - best times in the world 43.44 Michael Johnson (USA)
43.91 Butch Reynolds (USA)
44.03 Alon Pearson (USA)
1996 - bests by British team 44.37 Roger Black
44.65 Darren Thomas
44.66 Duane Lockett

800m

In a quiet year for the event, both Rodolfo, of Norway, and Hazel de Sengar, of South Africa, head the rankings, but the ubiquitous veteran American Johnny Gray may yet surprise them all.

Records

World 1:41.73 Sebastian Coe (GB) 1981
Olympic 1:43.00 Joaquin Cruz (Bol) 1984
British 1:41.73 Sebastian Coe 1981
1996 - best times in the world 1:41.98 Michael Johnson (USA)
1:42.47 Butch Reynolds (USA)
1:42.47 Hazel de Sengar (SA)
1:43.76 Barrymore Lettice (W. Africa)
1996 - bests by British team 1:43.69 Carl Williams
1:45.73 Colin Finch
1:45.81 David Sheng

1500m

Haile Gebrsellasse, of Ethiopia, the double world record holder, is favourite to win at both 1500m and 10,000m. Salih Hassan, of Morocco, is the man most likely to provide the upset of the Games.

Records

World 12:44.39 Haile Gebrsellasse 1995
Olympic 13:05.59 Said Aouita (Mar) 1992
British 13:00.41 David Hemery 1988
1996 - best times in the world 12:50.80 Salih Hassan (Morocco)
12:58.75 Bob Kennedy (USA)
12:59.19 Tom Tykot (W. Africa)
1996 - bests by British team 13:17.48 John Nuttal

5,000m

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10,000m

The longer of his two events comes first for the awesome Gebrsellasse. He has the ability to win off a fast or slow pace, as he showed when taking the world championship in Gothenburg last year.

Records

World 26:43.53 Haile Gebrsellasse 1995
Olympic 27:05.59 Ibrahim Belhadj 1988
British 26:33.08 Darren Martin 1988
1996 - best times in the world 27:00.29 Darren Martin (GB)
27:42.47 Robert Johnson (USA)
27:42.51 Abdellah Behar (France)
1996 - bests by British team 28:21.40 Jon Brown
28:28.31 Paul Evans

Marathon

The humid climate will test all and any of the runners, but the big three, Martin Fiz, of Spain, Dionisio Ceron, the three-times winner of the London marathon, and Lee Bong-ju, of Korea, should still dominate.

Records

World 2:06:50 Belenay Denkmo 1988
Olympic 2:02:51 Lukas Kukul (Czech) 1988
British 2:07:13 Steve Jones 1988
1996 - best times in the world 2:02:26 Martin Fiz (Spain)
2:03.26 Lee Bong-ju (Korea)
2:03.30 Gert Thyssen (Africa)
1996 - bests by British team 2:10.35 Steve Brate
Richard Kenner
Peter Whittaker

3,000m s'chase

Moses Kiptanui, the outstanding world record-holder, should lead his team-mates on to the medal podium to celebrate a second successive Kenyan clean sweep.

Records

World 7:59.19 M Kiptanui (Kenya) 1995
Olympic 8:51.11 Lukas Kukul (Czech) 1988
British 8:07.78 Mark Rowland 1988
1996 - best times in the world 8:00.22 Joseph Keter (Kenya)
8:11.76 A Lamberti (Italy)
8:14.23 Mathew Omo (Kenya)
1996 - bests by British team 8:02.95 Keith Colen
8:02.98 Justin Chedon
8:06.71 Spencer Dural



Christie: Needs to find an extra gear to retain his title

First three forecast

1. Fredericks
2. D'Saury (Cub)
3. Christie

400m

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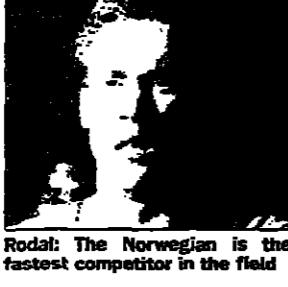
Black: Another British record should be enough for a medal

First three forecast

1. Johnson
2. Reynolds
3. Black

800m

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Rodolfo: The Norwegian is the fastest competitor in the field

First three forecast

1. Sengar
2. Rodolfo
3. Gray

1500m

Haile Gebrsellasse is the greatest middle-distance runner of his generation, unbroken since 1992. The year he failed to live up to his billing at Barcelona. Four years on, the opposition is stronger.



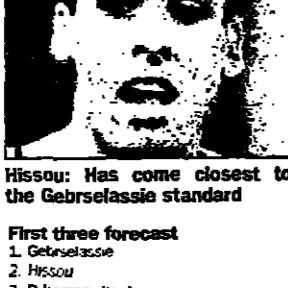
Gebrsellasse: Algiers expects him to make no mistake this time

First three forecast

1. Gebrsellasse
2. E. Gebrsellasse
3. Nyongabo

5,000m

Haile Gebrsellasse, of Ethiopia, the double world record holder, is favourite to win at both 1500m and 10,000m. Salih Hassan, of Morocco, is the man most likely to provide the upset of the Games.



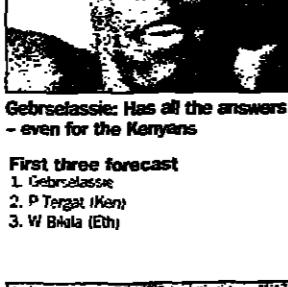
Gebrsellasse: Has come closest to the Gebrsellasse standard

First three forecast

1. Gebrsellasse
2. Hassan
3. D. Gebrsellasse

10,000m

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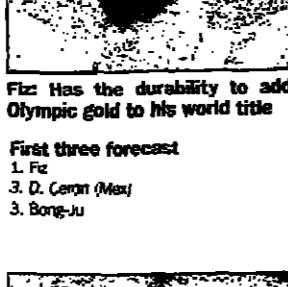
Gebrsellasse: Has all the answers

First three forecast

1. Gebrsellasse
2. Hassan
3. W. Gebrsellasse

Marathon

The humid climate will test all and any of the runners, but the big three, Martin Fiz, of Spain, Dionisio Ceron, the three-times winner of the London marathon, and Lee Bong-ju, of Korea, should still dominate.



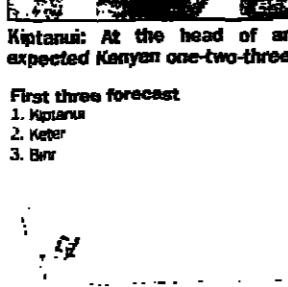
Fiz: Has the durability to add Olympic gold to his world title

First three forecast

1. Fiz
2. Ceron
3. Bong-ju

3,000m s'chase

Moses Kiptanui, the outstanding world record-holder, should lead his team-mates on to the medal podium to celebrate a second successive Kenyan clean sweep.



Kiptanui: At the head of an expected Kenyan one-two-three

First three forecast

1. Kiptanui
2. Keter
3. Bong-ju

Mike Rowbottom
previews two giants of the sprint world on a golden collision course

200m

If anyone needed convincing that this event could be one of the most memorable of the 1996 Games, the evidence came last month in Oslo.

On the tight, sheltered Bislett stadium track, Michael Johnson's 21-race unbeaten run in the 200 metres was brought to an end by Frankie Fredericks, whose delight at the end was patent.

"I got him!" yelled the Namibian, whose time of 19.82sec on an evening which was far from ideal for sprinting was a personal best. Until that breakthrough, there seemed little chance that Johnson, the world champion at 100 and 200 metres, would be seriously challenged in his ambition to become the first man to complete that double at the Olympics.

Others have bridged two running events - Carl Lewis took the 100 and 200m gold at Los Angeles in 1984, Alberto Juantorena won the 400 and 800m titles at Montreal in 1976 - but Johnson's intended combination has been out of reach until now.

Johnson has not been beaten at 400 metres for six years, but Fredericks's form this season has created a genuine doubt about his chance in the half-lap sprint even though the American has recently broken the 24-year-old 200m record with a time of 19.66 at the US trials.

Fredericks began the year by becoming the first man to break 20 seconds for an indoor 200m, lowering the world record to 19.92 in Lievin.

Johnson, never overly demonstrative, was sanguine in defeat, putting his performance down to a poor start and diplomatically avoiding com-



Fredericks (left) ends Michael Johnson's unbeaten run over 200m by defeating him in 19.82sec at the Bislett Games, Oslo, a win that set up the most eagerly awaited showdown of the Atlanta athletics programme

Photograph: Gray Mortimore/Allsport

ment on the apparent flyer with which Fredericks had got away.

As the two men had raced side by side down the final straight - Johnson leaning back as if he were running into a gale, Fredericks striding forward with his customary fluency - they presented a thrilling glimpse of what might happen in Atlanta. Assuming both men make their way safely to the final on 1 August, their experience in other events may be an important factor in the result. Both the 100m, which Fredericks may also contest, and the 400m will have been completed.

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Johnson, never overly demonstrative, was sanguine in defeat, putting his performance down to a poor start and diplomatically avoiding com-

ment on the apparent flyer with which Fredericks had got away.

As the two men had raced side by side down the final straight - Johnson leaning back as if he were running into a gale, Fredericks striding forward with his customary fluency - they presented a thrilling glimpse of what might happen in Atlanta. Assuming both men make their way safely to the final on 1 August, their experience in other events may be an important factor in the result.

Johnson, never overly demonstrative, was sanguine in defeat, putting his performance down to a poor start and diplomatically avoiding com-

110m hurdles

Colin Jackson has struggled to find his most fluent running this year. Allen Johnson, of the United States, and the German Florian Schwartau are the men with the form to fight for the right to be champion hurdler.

Records

World 12.91 Colin Jackson (GB) 1993
Olympic 12.88 Roger Kingdom (GB) 1988
British 12.91 Colin Jackson (GB) 1993
1996 - best times in the world 12.92 Allen Johnson (USA)
13.05 Mark Coates (GB)
13.11 Ronan Schwartau (Ger)
1996 - bests by British team 13.13 Colin Jackson
13.24 Tony Jarrett
13.64 Andy Tulloch

First three forecast

1. Johnson
2. Schwartau
3. Jackson

400m hurdles

Derick Adkins staked his claim at the US trials and on the European grand prix series to be the pretender to the one-lap hurdles crown of his regal predecessor Ed Moses and Kevin Young.

Records

World 46.79 Kevin Young (USA) 1992
Olympic 46.79 Kevin Young (USA) 1992
British 47.82 Kris Ak

track and field events in Atlanta

100m women

Since the Barcelona Games, Gwen Torrence has consistently reversed the form with her competitor and defending champion, Gail Devers. However, only worry is an injury niggles she felt in the US trials.

Records
World 10.49 Florence Griffith-Joyner (USA) 1988
Olympic 10.62 Florence Griffith-Joyner (USA) 1988
British 11.01 Kathy Cook (GBR) 1981

1996 - best times in the world

10.82 Gwen Torrence (USA)
10.91 Gail Devers (USA)

10.92 Merlene Ottey (Jamaica)

1996 - bests by British team

11.44 Marlene Richardson

11.47 Simonne Jacobs

11.52 Stephane Douglas



Torrence: If fully fit, she should win with something to spare

First three forecast

1. Torrence

2. Devers

3. Ottey

200m

Gwen Torrence failed to qualify for her stronger event, but Merlene Ottey and Irina Prokofieva, neither at their sharpest this season, may have to give way to another American, Carlotta Guidry.

Records
World 21.34 Florence Griffith-Joyner (USA) 1988
Olympic 21.34 Florence Griffith-Joyner (USA) 1988
British 22.19 Kathy Cook (GBR) 1984

1996 - best times in the world

22.14 Carlotta Guidry (USA)

22.18 Dannette Young (USA)

22.23 G McLaughlin (Russia)

1996 - bests by British team

22.65 Katherine Merry

22.95 Simonne Jacobs



Ottey: May find one American too many in her way - again

First three forecast

1. Guidry

2. Ottey

3. Prokofieva

400m

A showdown is promised between two marvellous 'floating' sprinters, the most elegant of women, Marie-José Pérec, of France, the Olympic champion, and Cathy Freeman, of Australia.

Records
World 47.60 Marita Koch (DDR) 1985

Olympic 46.65 Olga Stykina (URSS) 1988

British 49.43 Kathy Cook (GBR) 1984

1996 - best times in the world

49.45 Marie-José Pérec (France)

49.61 Cathy Freeman (Australia)

49.61 Fidelis Ogwueke (Nigeria)

1996 - bests by British team

51.74 Physi Smith

52.05 Donna Fraser



Pérec: Will have her work cut out to beat Freeman

First three forecast

1. Pérec

2. Freeman

3. Davis (USA)

800m

Ana Quirot, of Cuba, Fidel Castro's favourite athlete, faces the other: Marita Koch, the champion, Marita Motola, of Mozambique. The Johnson v Fredericks of the women's programme.

Records
World 2:02.22 Irinia Veretennikova (USSR) 1988

Olympic 2:02.43 Myoko Yamamoto (JPN) 1988

British 2:04.21 Kelly Holmes (GBR) 1995

1996 - best times in the world

2:07.04 Meredith Rainey (USA)

2:07.24 Natasja Dubrovska (Bulgaria)

2:07.33 Ana Quirot (Cuba)

1996 - bests by British team

2:07.84 Kelly Holmes

2:09.87 Diane Modahl



Quirot: Looking to improve on bronze in Barcelona

First three forecast

1. M. Motola (Moz)

2. Quirot

3. Rainey

5,000m

Sonia O'Sullivan of Ireland, the world champion, is the outstanding competitor. All Ireland will be looking to her to carry on Michelle Smith's golden feats in the swimming pool.

Records
World 14:36.45 Remonda Ribeiro (POR) 1995

Olympic 14:48.07 Zola Budd (GBR) 1988

British 14:51.07 Fernanda Ribeiro (Portugal)

14:41.12 Gabriela Szabo (Romania)

14:44.95 Aita Vaqueiro (Spain)

1996 - bests by British team

14:51.71 Paula Radcliffe

15:29.40 Sonia McGeorge

15:48.91 Alison Whyte



Ribeiro: Main threat to O'Sullivan in her double bid

First three forecast

1. O'Sullivan

2. Ribeiro

3. Szabo

10,000m

Wang Junxia is back in the shape she showed in 1993 when the Chinese women rewrote the middle-distance record books and she set her astonishing world best. July will do well to stay in touch.

Records
World 29:31.78 Wang Junxia (China) 1993

Olympic 30:05.22 Oleg Borkin (Russia) 1992

British 30:57.07 Li Mengxue (China) 1991

1996 - best times in the world

31:01.76 Wang Junxia (China)

31:01.76 Wang Junxia (China)

31:19.40 Hidemi Suzuki (Japan)

1996 - bests by British team

No one selected



Wang Junxia: A former member of 'Mia's army' still at the top

First three forecast

1. Wang Junxia

2. D. Tuku (Zim)

3. Ribeiro

Marathon

Le McColgan is an athlete transformed after changing her training programme under the tutelage of Greta Waltz. Her London Marathon run makes her Machado and Pippin's main rival.

Records
World 2:21:06 Ingrid Kristiansen (Norway) 1985

Olympic 2:24:52 Joan Benoit (USA) 1984

British 2:25:56 Veronique Martel (Canada) 1989

1996 - best times in the world

2:26:04 Kene Dore (Germany)

2:27:12 Ursula Poppe (Germany)

2:27:25 Yuki Kondo (Japan)

1996 - bests by British team

2:27:54 Alison McColgan

2:33:50 Suzanne Rigg



McColgan: Back to her best and with a real medal chance

First three forecast

1. McColgan (GBR)

2. Pippin

3. McColgan

100m hurdles

The flying American Gail Devers came to grief over the barriers in Barcelona and may find Ludmila Engquist (formerly Naroditskaya), and world champion five years ago) too strong for her this time.

Records
World 12.21 Yordanka Donkova (Bulgaria) 1988

Olympic 12.38 Yordanka Donkova (Bulgaria) 1988

British 12.82 Sally Gunnell (GBR) 1988

1996 - best times in the world

12.52 Ludmila Engquist (Swe)

12.57 Svetla Dimova (Bulgaria)

12.59 Ludmila Shchedrina (Russia)

1996 - bests by British team

13.02 Angela Thorpe

13.18 Jacqui Agnew



Devers: Will be hard-pressed to see off East European challengers

First three forecast

1. Engquist

2. Devers

3. Dimova (Bulg)

High jump

Nine years after setting her world record, Stefanie Kostadinova of Bulgaria is back home to defend it and is determined to beat the ex-world record holder, Andri Aszofai.

Records
World 2.03 Stefanie Kostadinova (Bulgaria) 1988

Olympic 2.03 Stefanie Kostadinova (Bulgaria) 1988

British 2.03 Stefanie Kostadinova (Bulgaria) 1988

1996 - best in the world

2.03 Stefanie Kostadinova (Bulgaria) 1988

2.03 Stefanie Kostadinova (Bulgaria) 1988

1996 - bests by British team

2.04 Jacqui Agnew

2.05 Stefanie Kostadinova (Bulgaria) 1988



Kostadinova: Chasing first Olympic title after 10 years at the top

First three forecast

1. Agnew

2. Kostadinova (Bulgaria)

3. Agnew (GBR)



PLAY FORMULA 1 DREAM TEAM



GRAND PRIX '96 RACE SCHEDULE

German GP July 28

Hungarian GP August 11

Belgian GP August 25

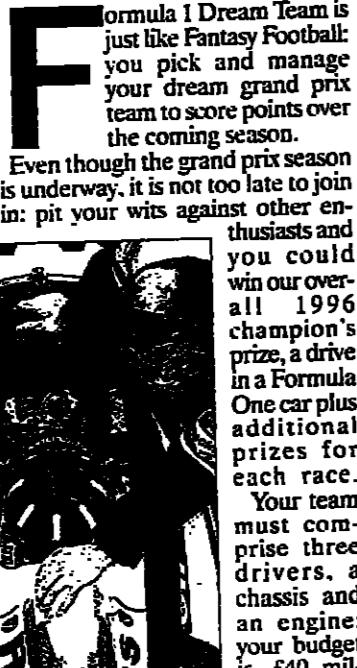
Italian GP September 8

Portuguese GP September 22

Japanese GP October 13

WIN a drive in a grand prix car

Plus prizes to be won with every grand prix



Formula 1 Dream Team is just like Fantasy Football: you pick and manage your dream grand prix team to score points over the coming season. Even though the grand prix season is underway, it is not too late to join in: pit your wits against other enthusiasts and you could win our overall 1996 champion's prize, a drive in a Formula One car plus additional prizes for each race. Your team must comprise three drivers, a chassis, and an engine; your budget is £40 million. Make your selections from the grand prix shopping list printed below, the only restriction is that your third driver must come from the £1 million category.

Details of how to enter are given on this page. You can enter a team at any point during the grand prix season but the earlier you enter, the greater your chances of being our overall champion. Remember, there are prizes for the winning Dream Team in each individual grand prix so you can enter a different team for each race.

HOW YOU SCORE
Points are awarded per race to the top six finishers, based on the Formula One World Championship points scoring system (10, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1) but with an extra 10 points awarded to each of the top six finishers.

All drivers are eligible to score for a top six finish but can also notch up extra points as follows:

- The fastest driver in race-day warm-up will collect six points, with five for the second and so on down to one point for the sixth quickest.
- Drivers score one point for each place they make up over their grid position. Points are not deducted by losing places.

- Five points are lost if your driver posts first retirement, four for second and one point lost for the fifth retirement.

- If your driver makes the quickest pitstop (from the entry of the pit-lane to the exit) you gain five points.

- If your driver sets the fastest lap time in the race, you gain five points.

- If your driver receives a stop/go penalty, you lose five points.

- If your driver starts on pole position, you gain five points.

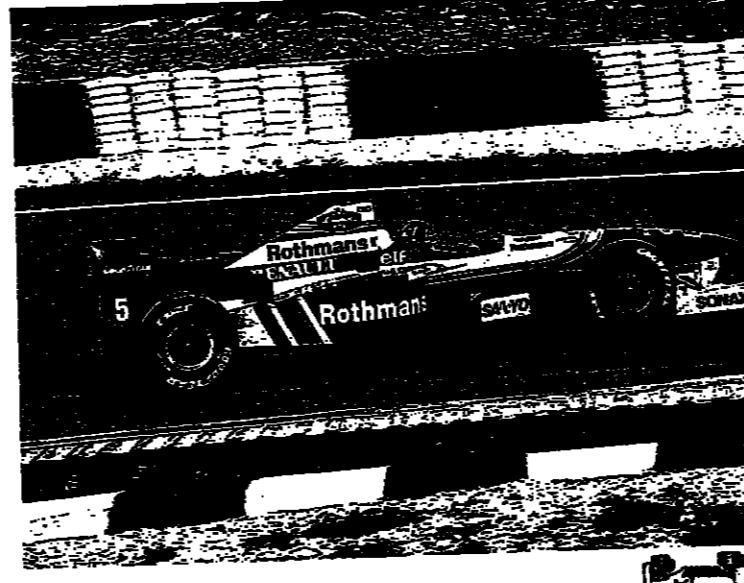
- The Independent will name a Driver of the Day after each race for a particularly impressive performance, worth five points.

- Non-qualification for a grand prix loses you two points. If a driver is on the FIA's published starting grid but fails to take the start, no points are lost.

- Drivers removed from the results for any reason lose all points gained that weekend. Any driver not competing in a grand prix weekend scores no points.

- Chassis score and lose points in the same way as drivers for a top six finish or any early retirement. The score is based on the first chassis home of that particular manufacturer. Likewise, only the first chassis retirement will count if they are both among the first five to retire.

- Engine rules are the same as the chassis rules, without the retirement penalties.



GERMAN GRAND PRIX PRIZE

The Dream Team manager with the highest number of points following the German Grand Prix will win a trip for two to the Belgian Grand Prix. Our winner and partner will spend a two-night break in Brussels over the August Bank Holiday weekend. On Sunday you will be taken to the Spa circuit where you can watch all the action from your grandstand seats.

DREAM TEAM TOP PRIZE

The Dream Team manager with the highest number of points at the end of the Grand Prix Championship season will win our top prize - a drive in a 550hp F1 car.

You will be flown to the AGS team's training school in the south of France for the most exhilarating experience of your life. The school specialises in F1 courses and provides all the racewear and instruction you will need for a day driving F1 and other single seat cars.

HOW TO ENTER

Choose your Dream Team from the shopping list on this page. Remember, you must choose three drivers (the third from the £1 million section), one chassis and one engine. Budget of £40 million.

Give your team a name and register it by ringing 0891 891 805.

You will immediately be asked the entry question: How many races are there in this year's Formula One World Championship?

To enter your Dream Team details you can use one of two methods.

Method 1 uses a tone phone that lets you key in the code numbers of your driver, chassis and engine choices. The computer will check that your team falls within budget and is eligible.

Method 2 uses a non-tone phone and you give your details verbally. A budget check is not possible using this method.

When you have registered your Dream Team, you will be asked to predict the number of points this year's champion will notch up over the year. In case of a tie at the end of the season, the nearest figure to the champion's points will win the top prize. In the event of a further tie, the team that registered first will win.

Once you have registered your team you will be asked for your name, address and telephone number. Your team selections plus your personal details will be played back to you and, when you confirm that they are correct, you will be given a PIN number.

This is confirmation of your entry and will enable you to access the score checking line.

There is no limit on the number of teams an individual can enter, but only one team can be registered per car.

CHECKING YOUR SCORE

You can check your team's position at any time by calling 0891 891 806 and quoting your PIN number. If you want to know the individual driver, chassis and engine scores from the most recent race, call 0891 891 807. This line will also list the Top 50 Formula One Dream Teams.

Rules

1. All telephone calls are charged at 39p per minute cheap rate, 49p per minute at all other times, with a typical call to secure your entry lasting between five and seven minutes.

2. The deadline to be included in a particular race is midday the Friday prior to that race.

3. The judge's decision is final, no correspondence will be entered into and there is no cash alternative for prizes.

4. Employees of Newspaper Publishing Plc, Haymarket Publishing Ltd and all associated companies and their families are ineligible.

5. Entrants must be 18 or over and residents of the UK or the Irish Republic.

6. To be eligible for the main prize, you must hold a current driving licence, be no more than 1.95m tall and weigh no more than 220lbs.

7. All scores will be worked out according to the official FIA time sheets produced at the meeting. The values stated for drivers, engines and chassis bear no relation to real life.

8. In the event of a tie for the Dream Team Top Prize or for any of the individual race prizes, the team that registered first will win.

9. For lost PIN numbers, call 0891 891 808. Helpline: 01275 344183.

10. The Top 50 Teams Line lists the top 50 teams from the last race. Both the Team Position Check Line and the Results & Top 50 Teams Line will be updated at 2 pm on the Monday following a race.

Make your selection from the Grand Prix

DRIVERS

£25m
1. M.Schumacher
£23m
2. J.Alonso
3. D.Hill
£20m
4. G.Berger
£18m
5. D.Coulthard
6. E.Irvine
7. J.Villeneuve
£17m
8. M.Hakkinen
9. H.H.Freudenthal
£16m
10. M.Brundle
11. R.Benichelli

£20m
12. J.Herbert
£19m
13. M.Salo
14. P.Lamy
£18m
15. P.Diniz
16. U.Katayama
17. J.Verstappen
18. G.Panis
£17m
19. L.Baader
20. R.Rosset
21. A.Montoyan
£16m
22. G.Bachella
23. V.Sospini
24. T.Martinez

£20m
25. F.Irvine
26. H.Nodes
£19m
27. M.Innes
£18m
28. M.Burton
29. J.C.Bouillon
30. K.Breath
31. K.Burt
32. E.Coulard
33. N.Fontana
34. D.Franchitti
35. N.Larini
36. J.Magnussen
37. A.Prost
38. G.Tarquini
39. K.Wendlinger

*Not competing in the German GP but may compete later

CHASSIS

£20m
40 Benetton
41 Williams
£18m
42 Ferrari
£15m
43 McLaren
£14m
44 Sauber
45 Jordan
£13m
46 Ligier
£6m
47 Tyrrell
£5m
48 Arrows

£3m
49 Minardi
£1m
50 Forti

£1.5m

51 Renault

£18m

52 Ferrari

£15m

53 Mercedes

£12m

54 Peugeot

£10m

55 Mugen

£8m

56 Ford V10

£6m

57 Yamaha

£4m

58 Hart

£3m

59 Ford Zetec

V8

£2m

60 Ford ED V8

£1.5m

61 Lotus

£1.5m

62 Williams

£1.5m

63 Sauber

£1.5m

64 Jordan

£1.5m

65 Ligier

£1.5m

66 Tyrrell

£1.5m

67 Arrows

£1.5m

68 Forti

£1.5m

69 Minardi

£1.5m

70 Larini

£1.5m

71 Brundle

£1.5m

72 Herbert

£1.5m

73 Alonso

£1.5m

74 Dizant

£1.5m

75 Katayama

£1.5m

76 Verstappen

£1.5m

77 Irvine

£1.5m

78 Hakkinen

£1.5m

79 Brundle

£1.5m

80 Herbert

£1.5m

81 Alonso

£1.5m

82 Dizant

£1.5m

83 Katayama

£1.5m

84 Verstappen

£1.5m

85 Irvine

£1.5m

86 Hakkinen

£1.5m

87 Brundle

£1.5m

88 Herbert

Hidden Personality
In between, there have been three Commonwealth titles, European Cup, World Cup and Olympic golds. These Games will be her sixth, a record for a British competitor.

July 24 1996

playing the game 9

For the cyclists who relish uphill battles

SO YOU WANT TO... BUY A MOUNTAIN BIKE

By Tom Chesshyre

Mountain biking began in California in the mid-Seventies. A group of cyclists who enjoyed cruising up and down beach promenades on souped-up home-made bikes - with extra long handlebars and fluorescent-coloured frames - decided they were bored with all the posing.

They saw beach-bum surfers getting a kick out of riding big "breakers" and wanted some excitement (and an adrenalin rush) of their own. So they took to the hills, particularly those in northern California, which had numerous off-beat tracks to whizz down. But a problem soon presented itself: their bikes were not up to bumpy rocks and uncovered roots - bits kept falling off. So they began to make adjustments to toughen up the frames and the wheels of their road bikes.

Twenty years on, mountain biking has grown into big business beyond the wildest dreams of those first few experimental riders. Last year, 2 million bikes were sold in Britain, of which 95 per cent were mountain bikes. Compare that with mountain bike sales a decade ago - which numbered just a few thousand or so each year - and the rapid growth of the sport has been nothing short of phenomenal.

"They've become so popular because you can take them almost anywhere," said Bruce Johnson, of British Mountain Biking, which is affiliated to the British Cycling Federation (BCF). "Traditional bikes can normally only withstand riding on roads while mountain bikes can go on dirt tracks, old tow-paths, hills, virtually anything."

The success is also down to the recent trend towards healthy outdoor living as well as the fact that anyone from about the age of 12 to 70 can ride them. Families can hitch bikes on to roof-racks and can go off on riding holidays together - and they don't have to stick to boring roads.

Most mountain bikes, which range in price from as little as £150 for basic models to up to £3,000 or so, are bought by those who want to go on leisurely weekend rides. However, there are now regular weekend competitions up and down the country for the more serious bikers: race-standard bikes begin at around £350. Most races, which are often broken down into age categories, are organised by local bike shops or centrally by the BCF.

British mountain bikers are considered - along with the Americans and the French - as among the best in the world. Caroline Alexander won the European Championships for Britain last year and is taking part in the Atlanta Olympics, the first time mountain biking has been included in the Games (another indication of its popularity). Alexander is aware of the challenge Atlanta will present: "You're close to your limit for two hours plus: the hammer goes down from the gun and you're at your maximum heart rate all the way. It's one of the toughest sports. Only cross-country skiing and marathon running can compare with it."

There is also a whole new mountain biking subculture. In rather the same way snowboarders have broken away from mainstream skiers and developed their own alternative "grunge-style" clothing on the slopes, the trendiest mountain bikers dress totally differently from traditional cyclists.

Instead of wearing the type of skin-tight Spandex worn by *Tour de France* riders, they look is baggy shorts or jeans, T-shirts, backwards baseball caps or wool hats. These mountain bikers tend not to enter competitions: they would rather - in the spirit of the Californian pioneers - head off for the hills and find a new, even more exciting track. For any rider keen on making it a reg-



Trail blazers: Mountain bikers break from the start of an off-road race at Eastnor Castle, near Malvern, on Sunday, where the spectators also brought their own wheels (below). Photographs: Sarah Bancroft

ular pursuit, the most important accessory is a safety-approved helmet - you will fall off, no matter your skill level.

Bikes these days are technologically advanced: titanium frames, front and back suspension, disc brakes and specially designed tyre treads to deal with different terrains and weather conditions.

But it can all get a little confusing for the beginner, especially when brochures explaining the various features slip into (almost incomprehensible) biking jargon: "Load-distributing spears", "bullet gussets", "weld beads", "rim sidewalls" and "four-bar linkage full-suspension". One brochure described its bike frames as having "ovalised seatstays for durability and torsional rigidity so they resist brake flex" and include taper gauge butting to shave weight and absorb shock".

Several mountain biking magazines have sprouted up recently, and run regular features helping to decipher the jargon and explain the pros and cons of the latest innovations. They tend to be very much consumer-led, concentrating on what bikes are the best value for money.

So what is the best way to go about buying a mountain bike? Bruce Johnson had some advice: "Be very careful about mail order catalogues. Sometimes bikes that are described as 'mountain bikes' aren't strong enough for proper *hill* cycling. The best thing to do is to go to your local shop and explain whether you intend to use the bike for casual excursions or if you are going to go on tough tracks and bash it about. It's important to get a bike that suits you."

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British Mountain Biking

Safety A helmet is a must. It is the most important piece of safety equipment. It should be well-fitted and comfortable. It should be certified to the appropriate standard. It should be a good quality helmet.

Brakes Disc brakes are the best. They are reliable and effective. They are also good for stopping in wet conditions. They are also good for stopping in wet conditions.

Wheels The best wheels are the ones that are well balanced and well aligned. They are also good for stopping in wet conditions.

Frames The best frames are the ones that are made of high-quality materials, such as light and strong. Middle-of-the-range bike frames are made of a mixture of aluminum and steel and are quite light at the front and heavy at the back.

Protective clothing Protective clothing should always be worn. They range in price from about £25 to £70. Downhill clothing is the most expensive, while mountain biking clothing is less expensive and usually less protective than downhill clothing. Competition also wear elbow, knee and shoulder pads, goggles and gloves. Beginners really need only wear gloves if they are riding sensibly.



From Mr F Pearson

Sir: I must admit that I am not a keen sports fan at the best of times, but the Olympics has stirred sensations of great boredom in me. Hundreds of finely tuned, occasionally drug-enhanced competitors participating in events that are decided in fractions of a second have taken away any possible thrill.

As a remedy, I suggest that in future Olympic Games the competitors are selected by a random process from the general public, eight weeks before the Games commence (to give them a chance to train). I believe even mundane events - such as the pole vault, gymnastics and synchronised swimming - would be given a new lease of life.

FENNER PEARSON
Cumbria

From Mr P Phillips

Sir: I read with interest the article written by David Llewellyn. "Clubs plan legal action over ban". The arrogant attitude of the RFL over the last few months, and indeed the senior clubs, is breathtaking. They have agreed with a broadcaster with only one aim in mind - to secure the largest pay for the very few.

It was the choice of the senior clubs to go professional. It was the choice of the RFL to accept the BskyB deal without taking into account the rich heritage that rugby has developed. It has taught and been involved in rugby at schools and clubs for many years and cannot reconcile myself to having to

SPORTS LETTERS

pay to see the Five Nations, particularly when I have sacrificed many weekends and evenings over many years developing the game locally for the greater good. Excellence in sport is not produced by wealth. Excellence in any sport is a blend of talent, expertise and the will to achieve greatness.

I believe the senior clubs have panicked after a poor performance in the World Cup and decided money is the solution. This is nonsense. We possess great talent in this country and could be the best. We have to consider our strengths and play to them rather than emulating the southern hemisphere as we are so often told to do by the RFL through various training courses. It is about time we had inspired coaches coming to the fore rather than retired internationals swanning round the country studying videos of how marvellous the New Zealanders play.

PETER PHILLIPS
Tunbridge Wells

Letters should be marked "For publication" and contain daytime and evening telephone numbers. They should be sent to Sports Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. They may be shortened for reasons of space.

JUST THE TICKET: a weekly guide to what's on where for the spectator

This week

Today's fixtures (except racing): Page 11.

CRICKET: Tomorrow (first day of five, including Sunday). *England v Pakistan* (1st Test), Headingley, Leeds. The England team should reveal its new line-up, a stronger proportion than regulars than usual. They have an extremely balanced side, heading young and experienced, and present Michael Atherton's men will be up against it to date. *England v West Indies* (2nd Test), Lord's, London. The West Indies are the campaign's main men. *England v New Zealand* (3rd Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (4th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (5th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v West Indies* (6th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (7th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (8th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v West Indies* (9th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (10th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (11th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (12th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (13th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (14th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (15th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (16th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (17th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (18th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (19th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (20th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (21st Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (22nd Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (23rd Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (24th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (25th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (26th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (27th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (28th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (29th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (30th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (31st Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (32nd Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (33rd Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (34th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (35th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South Africa* (36th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v Australia* (37th Test), Headingley, Leeds. *England v South 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Hidden Personality
But then she has always been a fighter, but never more so than in Los Angeles in 1984, when she triumphed at the expense of her fiercest rival, a fellow Brit. "Sweet?" she said. "It was ecstasy."

Warrington pin £1.35m price tag on Harris

Rugby League

Alex Murphy, the Warrington coach, fears Iestyn Harris has been tempted into leaving the club for a possible world record £1.35m fee by "other forces" promising him riches elsewhere.

Harris, who celebrated his 20th birthday last month, has been the subject of speculation recently linking him with a move to several union clubs, including Saracens, Cardiff and Llanelli.

The previous record fee was £250,000 plus two players which St Helens paid Bradford for Paul

Newlove last season. The deal was thought to be worth £500,000.

Harris, a Welsh international, was transfer-listed by Warrington yesterday after he asked for a move, with Murphy reluctantly admitting: "We are very disappointed but he has the rugby world at his feet and we feel our valuation is realistic."

"It has never been our policy to stand in the way of unsettled players—but we won't be moving unless a club comes up with the money we are requesting."

"We believe that there have

been other forces involved—outside our control. People have been speaking to him, obviously realising what a talent he is and obviously unsettling the kid. Maybe that's had some effect. It will be very, very interesting when all this breaks down to see which club he goes to—and what code he goes to."

Things started going amiss when he went back to the valleys, so you can read into that what you want. As soon as he started playing back in Wales he started getting little bits of news from the media and things

like that, and things started getting a little bit rocky."

Another Welshman, Scott Gibbs, is set to turn his back on the Super League leaders, St Helens, and return to rugby union. Llanelli, Cardiff and one of Gibbs' former clubs, Swans, are putting firm offers together to persuade Saints to release the Welsh international. But St Helens are adamant they will not sell for less than £200,000.

"There has been renewed interest from Wales, but we will only let Scott go at the right price," the Saints chief execu-

tive, David Howes, said. "He has told us he'd prefer to return to union in Wales. We will be reluctant to let him go because he is a top player," he said.

Richardson pulled out of the bidding for Gibbs at £170,000 and now hope to sign the former Neath and Warrington centre, Allan Bateman, from the Australian side Cronulla on a three-year contract. Negotiations are at an advanced stage, but Cronulla are determined to hang on to Bateman until September. "There is no way he's going back before then as we are on target for a play-off place and

The Central Park club have agreed to release him from his four-year contract despite their injury crisis. Northampton will pay a fee of £30,000 and Wigan are expected to use the cash to sign a prop forward.

Richard Henare, Warrington's New Zealand winger, has been referred to tomorrow's Rugby Football League's disciplinary committee meeting by the executive committee. They made the decision after viewing a video of the fighting that broke out in the second half of Saturday's match between Warrington and Bradford.

League breaks over the border

International rugby league comes to Scotland for the first time in 85 years next month. Scotland and Ireland will meet at Partick Thistle's Firhill ground on Tuesday 6 August.

It is only the third league international to be played north of the border, with the previous two in 1909 and 1911. However, the Rugby Football League is hoping the match can ultimately pave the way towards an eventual Five Nations Championship including England, Wales, France, Ireland and the Scots.

"This will be a ground-breaking venture and hope we can attract a reasonable crowd," said Graeme Thompson, the RFL's recently-appointed development officer for Scotland.

Scotland's team will be made up of players from Super League clubs and students. Leeds' Alan Tait, the former Scotland rugby union cap, could be the star attraction as captain of the home side.

The line-ups will be coached by the men who led them through the Halifax Emerging Nations World Cup—George Fairbairn of Scotland and Terry Flanagan of Ireland. The two teams met in Dublin a year ago with Ireland winning 26-22.

The problems rugby league will encounter in trying to get a foothold in Scotland have already become apparent in attempts to schedule this match.

It was to have been played on Wednesday 7 August, but was switched because it clashed with a Rangers game against Russia's Alania Vladikavkaz, in the preliminary round of the Champions League. However, if Celtic are drawn at home for the first leg of the Uefa Cup preliminary round, which is due to be played on 6 August, then the rugby league game will very much play second fiddle.

WRU threat to top clubs

Rugby Union

Leading Welsh rugby clubs are heading for a new showdown with the Welsh Rugby Union after agreeing a reported £22m deal with BSkyB for the televising of matches.

First Division Rugby Limited, an organisation of the top 12 clubs in Wales, claimed yesterday that each of their members will receive £1.85m during the course of the five-year contract.

That drew a rapid response from the WRU chairman, Vernon Pugh, who said that the clubs' decision renged on a recent agreement between the two bodies and could lead to the clubs losing their Union membership. But Pugh also said that he believed the reported package to be a "misunderstanding" and that the pact between the Union and their clubs formed a firm commitment to work together.

"We have received no official notification from First Division Rugby Limited and I do not believe they would even contemplate negotiating their own television agreement," said Pugh.

However, FDRL believe the matter is settled—at least in principle. "We were invited by the WRU to consider the options available to us. We have done so carefully. No other option that has been promoted to us is as attractive," a spokesman said.



Photograph: AP

Court case disrupts England plans

Cricket

mid-morning because the team have a breakfast appointment with the Prime Minister.

Because Atherton will be the first witness, he is not expected to miss the start of the Test tomorrow, but the pair's absence to-day is a further blow to England's plans, which have been disrupted by injuries to Nasser Hussain and Chris Lewis, making them both doubtful to face Pakistan.

The pair were subpoenaed to appear at the High Court yesterday but both failed to reach the witness stand. But they have been called back for today by Imran's counsel, Sir George Camm QC, when England complete their net sessions for the first Test and are likely to be absent, despite having practice put back to

who has been called after bringing up the subject of ball-tampering in his recent book.

"There is a real chance we may miss the nets tomorrow from what happened today," Lloyd said. Alan Knott and Peter Lever are likely to take charge of today's session and their first task will be to rule on the fitness of both Hussain and Lewis. Hussain has not played since his injury in the final Test against India at Trent Bridge and said yesterday: "If the test was tomorrow he would be struggling."

Lewis is doubtful after colliding with Paul Jarvis during Surrey's Championship match with Sussex at Guildford earlier this week and straining his thigh. But it did not prevent him from testing out a new radar system which will measure the speed of each ball. "The sword super" will which will be tested for the first time at Lord's and again at the final Test at Headington. The measures of the delivery and flashes up the time on a screen at ground level.

Pakistan's injury worries have eased with Waqar Younis coming through a test on his injured hamstring and opener Saeed Anwar being given the all-clear from a London specialist after fears of a recurrence of the typhoid-type complaint which sidelined him for most of last season.

Tennis

UNDER-18 EUROPEAN JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP (continued, Wetherby): Boys' doubles final: 1. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 2. J. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 3. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 4. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 5. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 6. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 7. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 8. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 9. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 10. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 11. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 12. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 13. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 14. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 15. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 16. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 17. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 18. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 19. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 20. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 21. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 22. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 23. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 24. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 25. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 26. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 27. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 28. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 29. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 30. C. Renshaw (GB) 6-3, 6-3; 31. C. 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Turkey's flame lit by 'The Greatest'

At the Turkish hospitality house in Atlanta on Monday, they were swapping stories about Naim Suleymanoglu when the little man walked in. Applause broke out and people pressed forward to shake his strong hand, planting kisses on his cheeks. "Naim, Naim" they chanted.

Suleymanoglu smiled, not in a shy way because he has grown used to fame, to being known as the greatest weightlifter in history, a national hero since winning his first Olympic title in Seoul eight years ago.

But even for the 28-year-old tiny lifter they call "Pocket Hercules" this was something special. A third gold medal. Delight showed in bright eyes that are set in bovine features and he raised stubby arms in triumph.

Earlier at the Georgia World Congress Centre he could not bear to watch when his greatest rival, Valerios Leonidis, returned for one last effort on the lifting platform.

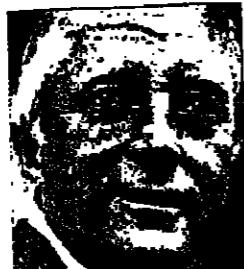
The Greek had a world record weight at his feet and a gold medal within his grasp. Back in the warm-up room, Suleymanoglu turned his back and stared at the wall of a cubicle. Hundreds of Turkish supporters who began cheering and singing 35 minutes before the start of competition in the 64kg (141lb) class started went silent.

Within the space of little more than five minutes three world records had been broken. Suleymanoglu had gone ahead with a lift of 187.5kg (413lb) in the clean-and-jerk, almost three times his bodyweight, forcing Leonidis to go for 190kg (418lb) more than he had ever attempted in practice.

As Leonidis rubbed resined hands along the bar and drew a deep breath, lost in concentration, there was barely a murmur from the 5,000 present. Expelling air, Leonidis heaved the weight up and squatted. Unable to rise from there, he let it fall to the mat. Suleymanoglu had an unprecedented third gold medal and a great cheer went up from the Turkish contingent. "You have just witnessed the greatest weightlifting competition in history," the announcer, Lynn Jones, said.

Backstage, Suleymanoglu, the last to know he had won, fell into the arms of his coach and team officials.

Great sympathy was felt generally for Leonidis, but Su-



KEN JONES
at the Olympics

leymanoglu had again proved the extent of his mental toughness in a sport that carries historical fascination with human strength.

Suleymanoglu has come a long way. An ethnic Turk born

to a desperately poor family in Kircali, Bulgaria, he defected in 1986 after coming up against government attempts to eliminate Turkish culture. After almost a year of diplomatic wrangling that followed his disappearance, Turkey paid Bulgaria \$1m (£600,000) so that he could represent them in the 1988 Games.

A second gold in Barcelona four years ago meant that Suleymanoglu was established as the leading figure in Turkish sport long before his latest tri-

umph. A member of the Turkish delegation, Togay Bayali said: "Naim is as big in Turkey as footballers are in other countries. For us he is like Michael Jordan in the United States. No doors are closed to him. I don't think he would be asked to pay in restaurants. No policeman would give him a ticket for speeding. There is a great deal of affection for him."

On Monday, what came down to a contest between Suleymanoglu and Leonidis was heightened by the fragile relations that exist between Turkey and Greece. To the credit of both men, age-old animosity was submerged beneath an encouraging manifestation of the true Olympic spirit.

Because Leonidis held the tiebreak advantage of weighing in lighter, another supreme effort was required of Suleymanoglu when the Greek equalled the new record of 185kg in the clean and jerk. He came to the platform, a curiously slumped figure with powerful thighs and arms out of proportion to his body. Up went the weight, up again and then a shout of triumph as he let go. Turning towards where his supporters stood cheering, he threw a punch at the air and

swagged from the stage. "Magnificent," somebody said, "absolutely magnificent."

On the podium afterwards, Suleymanoglu was a picture of serenity, a third gold hanging around a slab of neck muscles, a bouquet clutched in his right hand.

The greatest weightlifter in history? "That's for others to decide," he said. "I am human. Everybody makes failure. Everyone tries to be a champion." Rewards for this latest triumph? Suleymanoglu smiled, anticipating perhaps further financial gifts from a grateful government.

Suleymanoglu had intended

this

to be his last Games and it is doubtful whether he will compete in Sydney four years from now, but he will go on lifting. "It is my life," he said, "the only thing I have known."

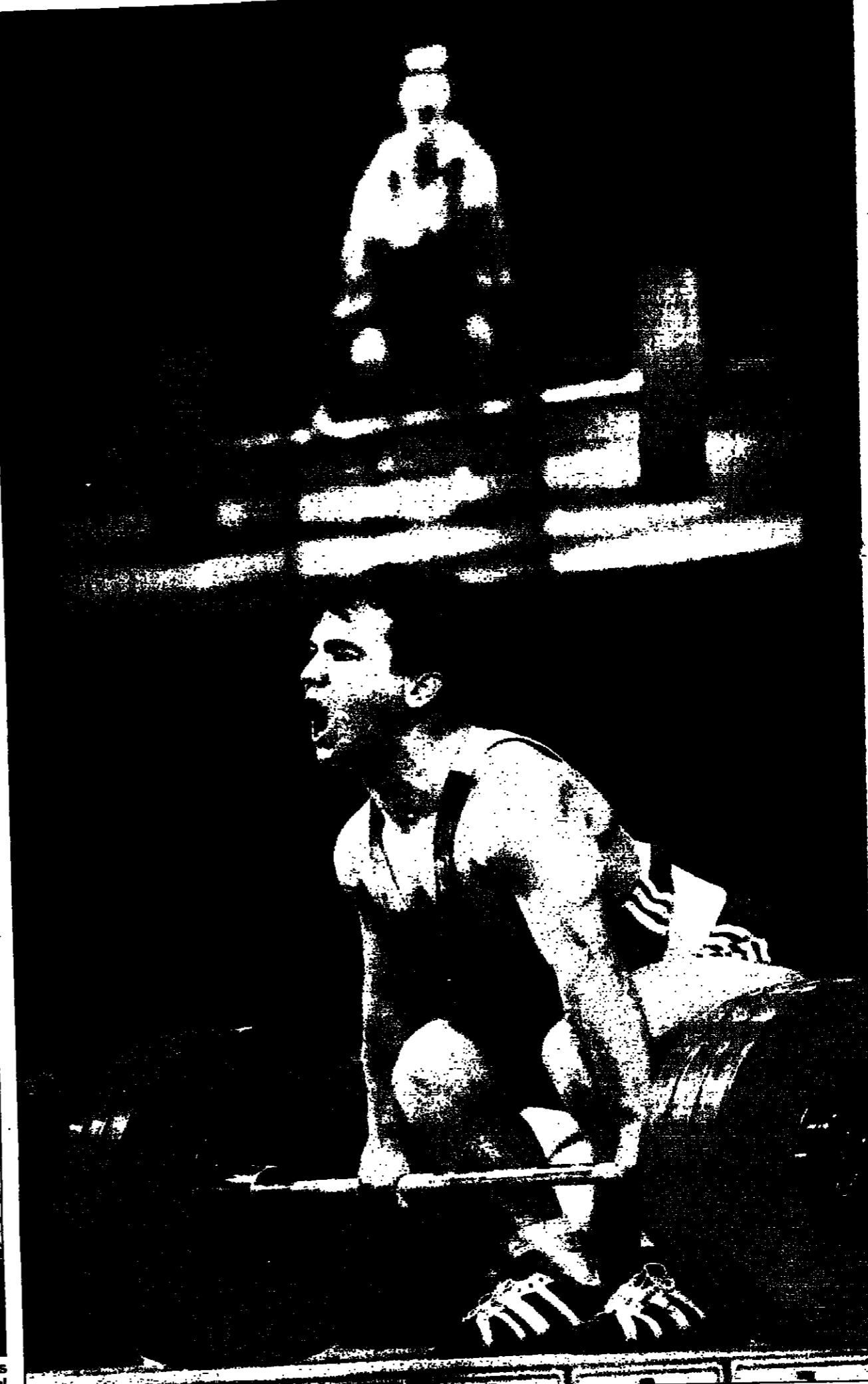
For Leonidis there was the realisation of destiny. "I felt I could beat him," he said. "I felt that I could make that lift but it wasn't written. When you compete against this man you have always to compete at world record levels."

When the words were translated for Suleymanoglu he nodded in appreciation. Applause followed him from the room.



Lifting a nation: Naim Suleymanoglu (right) is a picture of concentration as he prepares to clean and jerk a world record of 187.5kg (413lb) and earn both his third gold medal and the continuing adulation of his fellow Turks (above)

Photographs: David Ashdown

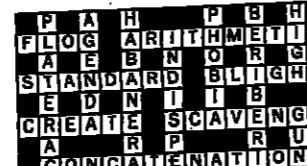


THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3047. Wednesday 24 July

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solutions



Chris Brasher in Melbourne, Don Thompson in Rome, Bob Braithwaite in Mexico. The hockey team not good enough for an invite but good enough for a bronze at Los Angeles. Mike McIntyre and Bryn Valle tacking into history at Pusan, the Searie brothers drowning Italian dreams at Bayonne. There's usually a shock somewhere in the Olympics.

Yvonne McGregor has gone almost unnoticed at these Games. While Christie snubs and Guinell anguishes and Redgrave roars on, McGregor avoids the headlines, indeed almost misses a mention. Such are the media demands on the 35-year-old from Bradford that preparation for the Games has been almost uninterrupted.

That's surprising for McGregor's a compelling tale. She only sat seriously on a racing bike at the age of 29 and, on Sunday, when the individual pursuit final takes place at Stone Mountain Park, it would not be courageous to find her winning it.

On the face of it, McGregor looks as if she has bounced, like a bagatelle, from sport to sport, but that's only half the truth. The cross-country running at

school and county level, the fell running, the triathlon and the world one-hour record last year all tapped her richest resource, her remarkable aerobic power.

The fell running career first took her to a world stage: in 1989 she finished eighth in the world championships, four places behind Britain's top finisher, the former marathon international Sarah Rowell. A club runner since she was 12 years old, she might still be running were it not for a pair of dodgy Achilles tendons.

A switch to the triathlon gave no relief to the problem, though she was strong enough at both the running and the cycling disciplines to place 18th in the European Long Course Championships. In 1991, the year her father died, she took to the bicycle properly.

It was a short apprenticeship. In her second full season she won two bronzes at the National Road Race Championships. The following year she was national champion at 10, 50 and 100 miles, and the year after, the al-

ally believed I could come back with a medal and I was desperately disappointed," she said.

McGregor has prepared for the Games assiduously. Now part of North Wirral Velo (Chris Boardman's club), she is being monitored by Boardman's physiologist, Peter Keen.

Using the test chamber at Eastbourne, where Keen works, they carried out acclimatisation trials before Atlanta. The controls were set to 34 degrees of heat with 90 per cent humidity. Cycling on rollers in the chamber, she took her body core temperature up to 40.3°C and, in one hour, lost 2.7 litres in sweat. The results pleased her. "I'm a good sweater," she said, "and that's important. According to Peter, I'm fairly heat resistant."

The pursuit form book is well documented: she lists the American Rebecca Twigg, the Italian Antonella Bellutti and the Frenchwoman Marion Clignet among the obstacles. At the national championships this year, McGregor did the second- and third-fastest pursuit times in history, so she knows her own standing, too.

"I'll probably be shaking like a leaf when I get there," she admitted. "But it's all right to be like that. Chris [Boardman] said that he was almost physically sick before the ride in Barcelona. And for Boardman, the result couldn't have been better."

Today's hidden personality

After a spell on the charity circuit, starring in the pantomime *Cinderella*, among other shows, Tessa Sanderson returns to the world stage in Atlanta to throw for Britain in the Javelin. Gold medalist at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Sanderson came out of retirement in May after a break of four years. Now 40, Sanderson has the benefit of experience to aid her medal quest.

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Last
Joke

John Cartl

Frozen embryos: the race for a new ethical code

What should we do with the 3,300 frozen embryos due to perish on 1 August? The law says that these spare embryos, created for couples undergoing IVF treatment, should be destroyed after five years unless the couple want them preserved for a further five years. David Alton, the "pro-Life" MP, predictably takes a different view: he wants these "orphans" to be put up for adoption. It depends whether we see them as human beings, or as property, say the philosophers. Most of us, however, don't regard frozen embryos as either one or the other. We would be alarmed at the notion that parents were free to sell or exchange their embryos in a free market. But we are even more unwilling to accord these embryos the same rights as an infant, and to accept the same obligation to protect them until a vacant womb can be found.

Frozen embryos are a new and strange phenomenon, made possible by rapid advances in medical science. It isn't surprising then, that they don't fit neatly into our existing moral categories. Nor is it an area where the state can easily pronounce. Working out the appropriate ethical response to new and complex circumstances can't be done quickly by ethics committees, or by MPs arguing at Westminster. Instead, thousands of couples need to make their own moral decisions as they confront the dilemmas afresh. Out on

the frontier of medical ethics, we muddle through, following our instincts, making mistakes we regret, and finally, gradually building a consensus.

But as we feel our way, the legal framework is extremely important. In the case of the frozen embryos, as with IVF for ageing mothers and countless other fertility dilemmas, most of the decisions should be made in agreement between the individual parents and doctors involved. But the state can't opt out altogether. For a start, patients need to be sure that the rules they agreed to will be strictly abided by and enforced. Professionals may well want guidance about what the community as a whole will accept.

So when it comes to these particular frozen embryos we should follow the rules. When couples consented to IVF treatment five years ago, they knew that additional embryos would be created and frozen. They were assured that those embryos would not be taken for medical research, or given to another couple, without their consent. And they were told that unless they indicated otherwise, the embryos would be destroyed this year.

Ideally each couple should now decide the future of those embryos. Some will want them preserved for longer, if they are spreading a family, or saving for another round of IVF treatment. But 900 couples cannot be traced. Perhaps the HFEA should make more effort to

track them down and force them to make the decision themselves. But should they fail to do so, the procedures are clear: as the producers expect, the embryos should be destroyed.

The pro-Life lobby believes that the rules are immoral. However, it would be far more unethical to change the rules now. Imagine if we took David Alton's advice. Couples could suddenly find that against their wishes someone else was bearing and bringing up the brother or sister of their own children. That wasn't something they were warned about when they first agreed to fertility treatment. Nor is it

something they should be forced to do and adjust to now.

David Alton and his pro-Life supporters are actually trying to return the debate to first principles again: human life starts at conception and is sacred. Therefore unwanted day-old embryos are orphans. However, most people disagree with Alton's first principles, believing instead that there are no strict absolutes, only judgements to be made and balances to be achieved. No one will stand in the way of parents who agree with Alton (and the Vatican) braving the heartache of trying to bear every frozen embryo to term.

Heartache, it undoubtedly will be, as very few implantations of frozen embryos are successful.

But the absolutists cannot impose their views on other families who disagree. What dies with the embryo is not a child, but a couple's potential for children. We should not be distracted by old debates when new ethical dilemmas over fertility are demanding our attention all the time. One such example is the HFEA's announcement this week (lost amidst the fuss about orphans) that they planned to phase out payments to women who donate eggs. The HFEA are concerned that financial inducement is a bad reason for giving eggs, and risks undermining both respect for human life, and genuine free choice. Donation, they say, should be a gift.

The same approach applies to spare embryos: these could in principle be donated to infertile couples, but they cannot be sold to them. Our anxieties about the effects of an unregulated free market in fertility go to the heart of our reasons for legislating at all – rather than just allowing everyone to do exactly as they wish.

But here we are still feeling our way. Unless the taxpayer has a sudden change of heart and agrees to the extra cash for free fertility treatment for everyone, there will always be money involved. And some people will struggle to afford the treatment so desperately want. Allowing couples to sell

their extra embryos in order to pay for their own treatment may not be so immoral after all. Many people may prefer to have five children – two of whom are brought up by strangers – than to have no children at all.

We don't know the answers, we probably all have different answers. But we reach better conclusions if we move forward slowly, rather than allowing ourselves to be muzzled by legislators or cowed by the absolutism of Alton and his ilk.

A slow starter

Now people are moaning that the Olympics seem boring. Could it be that we British are getting jaded? Nerves were stretched by England's performance in Euro 96; that was followed by the delirium of Tim Henman's Wimbledon success. Perhaps the disappointment comes from Atlanta itself. The scale and pretentiousness of the games make many events seem ridiculous. Olympic tennis and soccer are a waste of time compared to the real thing. Sports such as beach volleyball seem intended largely to titillate. Why not Olympic darts or skittles? Yet it's too soon to write Atlanta off. Athletics, still the heart and soul of the games, have hardly started till Linford Christie runs.



ONE CANADA SQUARE CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE 0171-293 2000 / 0171-345 2000 FAX 0171-293 2435 / 0171-345 2435

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How money buys success at school

Sir: Amid the discussion of lack of motivation among working-class children ("Middle-Class kids rule, OK?", 18 July) there was no mention of simple lack of money.

My son is nearly eight years old. Over the past four years (nursery and infants school), the small circle of his friends have had a variety of extra lessons outside school, including pre-school maths, French, Greek, music, dancing, swimming and tennis. Some of these children have lessons after school on three afternoons every week. They also have access to a variety of the latest educational software on their parents' PCs.

Although I am unable to afford my son more than one extra lesson per week and a basic word-processor, he is relatively fortunate. As a graduate, I am perfectly capable of teaching primary school maths and French myself. I have no problem providing him with a supply of up-to-date educational books – our local library is steadily reducing its stocks. I can afford to take him on educational visits to museums, castles, the Tower of London etc. Many of these places now charge quite heavily, which with the addition of train fares places it quite out of reach of those on £77 per week income support or £3.50 per hour wages.

My son attends a (state) school which lies mid-way between a council estate and a middle-class residential area. There is a pool of well-educated mothers who do not have to work and are therefore available to act as free high-quality classroom assistants, thus mitigating the effects of rising class sizes. The work of these better-off families through the PTA has provided the school with many extra facilities.

This is in stark contrast to a local school in a different area of town where I recently did some volunteer work. The staff are expert and dedicated, but there are not nearly enough of them, and the parents appear largely unable to help. Many of the mothers speak little or no English, and many are forced to work.

The parents of today's 11-year-olds were educated during the Sixties, when there was generous state provision for education, altruism rather than selfishness was fashionable, and it was considered both a moral duty and an investment in the future for people to good salaries to contribute generously through taxation to the education of all the nation's children.

ALISON TURNER-RUGG
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Sir: Despite her effective objections to Peter Saunders' work on meritocracy (18 July), Yvette Cooper is still too charitable. Saunders seems to think that it is fair for social advantage to be passed from parents to children as long as this is done democratically. But why?

I suppose Saunders is right to believe that their superior, inherited, natural ability helps explain why children of middle-class parents are so likely to get middle-class jobs. How does that make the resulting distribution of income "unequal but fair"? Why should one person earn more than another simply because she happens to have been born with different genes?

Arguing that people should get



My career was on hold and nobody knew who I was until I resigned

jobs on merit is one thing; it helps all of us if jobs are done by those best able to do them. But permitting their good or bad luck in the natural lottery to influence how much money people earn doesn't look very fair to me.

ADAM SWIFT
Bolton College
Oxford

Vouchers will restrict choice

Sir: The National Private Day Nurseries Association has long been shouting its disapproval of schools considering lowering the reception class entry age to four, in order to improve their financial status. ("Vouchers scheme forces schools to start children at four", 22 July). We insist that parents have a choice as to where they place their four-year-olds; in effect this choice is being removed. Parents will need to take up school places offered or run the risk of having no place at the school of their choice when the child reaches compulsory school age.

Private day nurseries can offer education and care on the same site with ratios of one adult to every eight children, as laid down by the Children Act. Can a reception class of up to 40 children with one teacher provide the same opportunities? Each sector is being forced to compete against the other. Are the years of partnership building to be swept away by an ill-conceived scheme?

ROSEMARY MURPHY
National Chair
National Private Day Nurseries Association
Huddersfield, West Yorkshire

Spooks with no licence to kill

Sir: Jo Brand (20 July), writing about my and allegedly Stella Rimington's participation in the game show *Wanted*, claims that "the spy service... doubtless killed people". She did not get it quite right.

The KGB, as the Soviet socialist state's secret police, in the past killed innumerable of their own people. Its foreign intelligence branch carried out assassinations abroad on some of its opponents. But then it got cold feet, and since the 1950s it did not dare kill a single person outside the borders of the USSR. The British intelligence and security services have never killed anybody.

OLEG GORDEVSKY
London WC2

Making NHS do the business

Sir: Further to the letter from Dr Rhidian Morris (13 July) on GE fundholding, I entered the National Health Service in 1991 when I became a fundholding manager for a first-wave fundholding practice, having spent my life before that as company secretary and accountant in industry and commerce.

I was amazed at the lack of business expertise within the NHS, and more so by the lack of basic

statistical knowledge about the needs of patients. The practice could not say which of its patients were on hospital waiting lists, or for what procedures, and hospitals could not say how many people were waiting, and how the problem was being tackled. There was little evidence of information available which could be used for forward planning, establishing priorities, or writing budgets (they said "what's a budget?"), and the whole ethos of the service was that money would continue to flow from central coffers as needs emerged.

Fundholding and the establishment of NHS trust hospitals has changed all that. Proper business plans are now in place at all units, so that everyone knows what the objectives are, and how it is proposed to meet them. Complaints about a two-tier service are rubbish – if you set out to improve a service, you can't expect immediate and universal success throughout the land. What you can do is gradually introduce the changes over the longer term.

GRAHAM BLINCOV
Sheffield, South Yorkshire

Battling heirs to Tolpuddle

Sir: Polly Toynbee (22 July), using as a peg for her piece the annual Tolpuddle commemoration, wrote an ill-informed obituary for trade unionism.

She strangely omitted to mention that on the day before

Tolpuddle, the TUC's Respect Festival drew 80,000 young people to Finsbury Park in north London. This event was sponsored by companies such as British Airways, BT, Coca-Cola, Marks & Spencer and Ford. When did a political party last attract such numbers?

Neither did she mention that 85 out of the FT-SE top 100 companies still recognise and negotiate with unions; that last year the TUC and member unions recovered £350m for employees taken ill or hurt for work; reasons, and that we handled two million job-related personal problems.

Joe Hill, the American union folk hero, said, "Don't mourn, organise" and that's what we are doing in insecure, unequal Britain.

JOHN MONKS

General Secretary

Trade Union Congress

London WC1

Sir: As a descendant of two of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, Thomas and John Standfield, I must correct Polly Toynbee's commonplace error: they were not convicted of forming a trade union, a lawful activity under an 1832 Act. Rather, their crime was to administer an illegal oath, under the *Administration of Oaths Act*, 1797.

This and the Mutiny Act of the same year were designed to prevent the enticement away from service of men during the Napoleonic Wars. The 1797 Act was used by vested interests to frustrate the intentions of the 1832 Act.

C H STANDFIELD
London W7

Humbug? No, just democracy

Sir: Seeking to change the world does not entail acting as if you had already done so.

MPs ought to be dedicated to democracy, so there is nothing inconsistent or "odd", as David Winnick, MP, seems to suppose (report, 23 July) in MPs voting against a pay increase, but then accepting it when outvoted.

Tony Blair is publicly engaged in combating "crime and the causes of crime", but no one accuses him of being a humbug if he locks his car after parking.

Why then, is Harriet Harman under attack?

ROGER LAKE

York

CNN cameras on the roof

Sir: Bob Graham's article from Atlanta (6 July) stated that CNN plans to broadcast live coverage of the Olympics, using a camera site on the roof of Pan Am's Bar. This is categorically not true.

CNN will use the roof of Pauly D's Bar, as well as many other locations, throughout Atlanta, as a backdrop to report the news of the Games. We are aware of, and fully respect, the broadcasting agreements between the International Olympic Committee and the companies that have bought the rights.

GERALDINE SHARPE-NEWTON
Senior Vice President
International Public Relations
Turner Broadcasting
London W7

Futile challenge to the euro

Sir: None of the politicians who want us to cling on to a weak national currency tell us how they will protect the pound from a rush into the euro, which will be backed by currency reserves many times ours and will be traded in a rich market of at least 200 million customers.

At present the yield on UK corporate bonds is 30 per cent higher than it is in the core countries of the euro, France, Benelux and Germany, so their industrialists can put down 30 per cent more investment for the same interest cost, leaving us to tag along with older and older products. Sure, we want our labour costs to be competitive, but industry today is capital-intensive, and if our industry does not have a level playing field on the cost of capital now, what interest premium will they have to offer when there is a common European currency as strong as the German mark and far more widely traded? And if we cannot keep up with their investment, how can we balance our trade and keep our people at work?

Sir FRED CATHERWOOD
Balsall, Cambridgeshire

Oxford doubts on Said college

Sir: You report ("Saudi 'Mr Fixit' gives Oxford £20m", 17 July) that £20m is to be given to the University of Oxford to build a new college for management studies. Your report would have been more complete if it had mentioned the misgivings some friends of the university feel about the proposal.

They are as follows: that the building is to go on a "green" site near the centre of the city and university; that the proposed college will be single-discipline;

and, most important, that the discipline, management studies, lies too far from the proven subject areas which have given Oxford and Cambridge their world reputation.

In voicing these anxieties I recognise the generosity of the intending donor, Wafie Said. But at a time when the Bodleian Library closes early for lack of staff, when teaching posts are frozen in core undergraduate subjects like classics (Oxford's faculty was described to me recently as the "best in the world"), and when students end their three-year course usually in debt, it is hard to applaud a "greenfield" creation recommended, apparently, mainly by the readiness of well-wishers outside the university to pay for it, yet a mere fraction of whose cost could supply the vitamins whose lack weakens the university in its existing functions.

ALEXANDER MURRAY
University College
Oxford

Encore!

Sir: Now that the promenade concert season is with us again I would like to know why home orchestras at concerts in London rarely, if ever, play encores – no matter how enthusiastically their performance has been received. Visiting foreign orchestras can be relied upon to continue to entertain with two or three additional pieces at the end of the published programme.

KENNETH BILLINGS
Crowborough, East Sussex

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number.
(Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

the commentators

If your job embarrasses you, get a new one

When people choose to do distasteful work despite their private beliefs, public morality is eroded

A question of principle is it OK for your day job to conflict with everything else you believe in? Can you labour all day in the fields of your enemies, then come home in the evening, take out your conscience and sigh about the way one has to make one's living these days? Growing numbers of people live in this schizophrenic fashion, trying to hold on to a personal morality of their own while doing things at work they despise. What does it imply for any kind of public morality if that is an acceptable way to live?

A most glaring example came to light this week when it was revealed, despite her first denial, that the main author of the leaked Treasury document that thought the unthinkable about demolishing the welfare state, privatising roads, and abandoning tree higher education was herself attempting to become a Labour candidate in a safe Yorkshire seat. By day she was *Arthla the Hun*, by night she was new Labour – a political werewolf.

Yesterday it emerged that her original draft was even more unthinkable before it was toned down. One Whitehall official was quoted as saying: "The riot act was read when the original was handed in. It was politically explosive. It advocated virtually the privati-

sation of the entire NHS, the welfare state and sell-off of the public transport system."

Now while one or two hot-heads among right-wing conspiracy theorist MPs immediately suspected a red mole in the Treasury who had deliberately produced an embarrassing document to discredit the Government, no one else takes that idea seriously. The author is a 37-year-old middle-ranking official who has been in the Treasury for 15 years, and her employers do not think she had any hand in leaking her report. Its leaking has, after all, embarrassed her more than anyone else and it has probably destroyed her political ambitions.

No, the phenomenon is far more interesting than that. You could say she was the very model of the modern civil servant: a clever, efficient instrument who can turn her hand to any task she is given. Each day she hangs up her own conscience on the peg where she hangs her coat. She is an automaton, without personal morality, a paradigm of obedience to her political masters. Sir Robin Butler should be proud of her.

But what do we really think of people who live like that? Do we really want to be ruled by people without personal accountability for their actions – just following orders, just



POLLY TOYNBEE

doing their job? In Whitehall, the best permanent secretaries, the most creative and admired, have been those who do let their own opinions show. There is a lot of constitutional fiction about the role of civil servants. After all, ministers pass through departments every two years or less, arriving knowing nothing, leaving knowing mainly what their civil servants have taught them. Do we want politicians to be guided and educated by those who pretend to no personal values, with no moral stake in the affairs they govern? I would prefer men and women of principle, right or left – even though that might mean that on a change of government they would be more likely to be moved on. There is nothing very admirable in the rubber morals of a civil ser-

vant who can, for instance, enthusiastically help Michael Howard fill prisons to bursting point and then with equal vim let them all go again under his successor.

This institutionalised amorality is also a striking feature of life in the law. The much vaunted *lex talionis* principle whereby barristers hire themselves out to the next corner, regardless of the merits of the case, has always struck me as singularly odd. It makes the law a game rather than a matter of conviction. Getting some villain of becomes a matter of brilliance and prowess for which they congratulate one another.

The culture of the hired gun is creeping up on us everywhere. These days it flourishes in the contract climate of job insecurity. People feel scant responsibility for the work they do and little identification with their place of work or its purposes, when their employers show no particular commitment to them. That makes it easy for them to absolve themselves of moral responsibility for the job they do.

I suppose I see the most extreme end of that in the world of journalism. Apparently serious and decent journalists hire themselves out as fig leaves of respectability to pretty despicable newspapers justifying it

Guns are fine, but don't ask for a hose

The wells of sanity are drying up, says Ann Treneman

Britain is suffering from sprinkler restrictions so out of control that the grass is even greener in America's desert state of Nevada. "What is a sprinkler licence?" asked an amused Jim Rickert, the senior water licence officer for Las Vegas. "Even with our drought, we haven't gone to those extremes."

It is easier to buy a gun in Las Vegas than use a sprinkler in Kent. In Vegas, you go to the gun store, fill out a form and wait five days for FBI computer checks. In mid-Kent, you call "sprinkler information" to be told your "free" sprinkler licence requires a water meter. That costs £150 and takes four to five weeks to arrive.

It may even be easier to license a gun here than to sprinkle legally. On the *Guns and Hoses* chart, a five-year shotgun licence is £43 and a renewal is £18 while a sprinkler licence (even without the metering charge) can cost from £20 a year in Chester to £49 in Wesser. Of course, to license a gun you need to apply to your local police station and get a referee. No such thing is needed for a sprinkler licence – yet.

That "yet" is necessary because sprinklers are the contraptions that drive neighbours to turn each other in, giving green with envy a new meaning. "We get three or four people phoning in each day to say their neighbour is using a sprinkler. Our customers are very supportive," says Malcolm Bailey of Mid-Kent Water.

If you look up in the sky over Kent you could see a plane trailing the message, "A Sprinkler Needs a Licence". In England and Wales some 10 companies charge for hosepipe or sprinkler licences; others offer "free" licensing if you pay out for a meter.

Ofwat, the consumer watchdog, favours metering. It says that a sprinkler uses as much water in an hour as a family of four does in two days.

In Vegas, it's a different story. There, the green, green grass of a mythical non-desert home is seen as a birthright and Stephanie Stalworth of Southern Nevada Water Authority thinks education, not legislation, is the way forward: "People see a strong correlation between lush green landscaping and quality of life. We've got to change the mentality. We would like to see turf used for functional purposes only. Otherwise, we encourage other landscapes. For instance, there's xeriscaping, that's the latest thing in desert landscaping. It uses drought-tolerant succulents and palms. It's very beautiful."

In Las Vegas the average water cost for a family is about £150 a year and there has never been a sprinkler ban. In this green and pleasant land the average water bill is about £215 a year and there are six companies with hosepipe bans in England.

Oh, did I mention average rainfall? In England it is 32.4 inches a year. In Las Vegas it is 3.8 inches. Xeriscaping seems the only way to go.

Ol' blue eyes: she harangues and hectors in spite of her smooth image Tony Buckingham



Harriet in the shadows

She may survive today's election but there are doubts over Harriet Harman's long-term place in Tony Blair's top team

She is the telegenic face of new Labour and she will not be abandoned now, despite the hostility of fellow MPs and their thirst for revenge over her decision earlier this year to send her son to a selective grammar school.

If Harriet Harman, Labour's health spokesperson, survives today's Shadow Cabinet election, it will be due entirely to a show of front-bench solidarity that has been dictated in almost Stalinist terms from the top.

For Harriet Harman, 45, the member for Peckham in south-east London, holds a trump card or two, and can afford to brazen out her deep unpopularity with the parliamentary party. But it has less to do with her political skills – questions about which have dogged her career in the Commons – than with her perceived attractiveness to certain voters.

First off is her quintessential middle-classness. Her father was a Harley Street consultant and her mother a lawyer. She is a niece of the well-connected Labour peer Lord Longford, and she was educated at St Paul's, a private girl's school in London. Harman studied law at York University before qualifying as a solicitor. It is a pedigree that speaks louder to wavering Tory supporters and floating voters in the South-east than any policy document or assurance from a front-bench male.

She has the "F" factor appeal to male voters – fanciability – but this is balanced by her role-model status for working

women everywhere. She is, by every account, a devoted mother of three and enjoys a successful marriage to Jack Dromey, a national official with the Transport and General Workers' Union.

She looks good on television too: Blair's ears, Brown's jowls, and John Prescott's straining bulldog-in-a-suit persona are diminished on any platform by

was for a hypothecated tax for the NHS – something that was promptly sat on by John Smith, a Treasury man to the core.

Critics say she has consistently failed to come across as a thinker, or even as someone with more than a basic grasp of policy.

Her greatest strength is also her greatest weakness. She has the self-confidence of someone born to rule. This may give her an unshakable belief in her own abilities, but it makes her look arrogant and impervious to criticism.

At odds with her water-friendly and stylish appearance is a tendency to harangue and hector. This strident style is off-putting in debate. She has an unnerving ability to confuse voters on key issues, such as the private finance initiative in the NHS and Labour's on-off support for it.

She is a modernist and yet her instincts on the health service are clearly old Labour. She rejects vehemently anything at all worthwhile in the Tory's NHS reforms. And her apparent lack of clout with the Shadow Cabinet means that, on current figures, Labour will enter an election campaign with less money in real terms for the health service than the Conservatives.

Her sound-bites are predictable and she relies heavily on statistical bombardment – rather in the style of that other "Head Girl", the former health secretary Virginia Bottomley.

Officials at the Department of Health live in fear of Harman's arrival there as another

Bottomley who will attach as much importance to presentation and style as to the substance of her policy.

But there is more: Harman has never given any indication that she understands the difference between being in Government and opposition. She can cope adequately with attacking and rejecting Tory government policies. But she has yet to show that she can come up with new ideas or make hard choices about the NHS – and take people with her who don't agree. On present form, not something she appears to care much about.

However, her frequent wimpy performances in the House of Commons and at press conferences have occa-

sionally been redeemed by flamboyant displays of grittiness. One such was her appearance before the Parliamentary Labour Party in January to explain why she was sending her son, Joe, to St Olave's, the grammar school in Orpington, Kent, 10 miles from the family home. The adrenaline was still flowing that afternoon with an acclaimed performance in the Commons when she opened an opposition debate on the health service. Temporarily, she silenced calls for her resignation. Blair breathed easy.

The secret of Harman's political survival so far – lies in her tenacity, and her ability to tough it out in a crisis. She has been bolstered in this by total faith in her own value to new Labour in any election campaign. But should Labour win the next election, she will have to deliver on more than votes.

For the time being, Harman has the patronage of Blair – at least until the election. He said at the time of the St Olave's crisis that he understood absolutely the dilemma of a parent wanting the best for a child, and he risked much to save her. But it is said that she has not been grateful enough to him and his closest aides are still baying for her blood.

Mischief-makers have been touting the name of Harman's great friend Tessa Jowell as the real choice for health secretary should Labour form the next government. Revenge enough for her enemies?

Blinking Hell

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Railway hopes disappear down the tunnel

Cross-Channel train services have disappointed expectations of a rail renaissance. Is there another way?

The Channel Tunnel should have been the best thing to have happened to Britain's railways since the railway mania of the 1980s. As the holiday season of 1996 reaches its height, one might have expected people all over Britain to be lining up on train platforms to be swept by rail to their sunny European destinations, but it hasn't worked out that way.

There are of course the wonderful Eurostars and those huge freight trains on improbable runs, such as Manchester to Milan. But the Channel Tunnel has not transformed and invigorated the rail network in the way railway lovers hoped it would. So far, all companies involved in the tunnel are losers. The freight companies have leached money, Eurostar is barely breaking even and of course Eurotunnel itself is all but bankrupt.

Earlier this month, British Rail announced it was writing off £500m because it had been too optimistic in its assessment of the level of freight going through the tunnel. And while the passenger side has been more successful, it has not been profitable. Last year Eurostar, which was still building up momentum, made an operating loss – ie, it lost money even if one ignores the interest payments on the 1990s or so it spent on trains and refurbishing lines. This year, when Eurostar trains

are expected to carry four million passengers, it will probably make an operating profit but that is not good enough. London & Continental, the company that won the tender to build the £3bn Channel Tunnel rail link, has given the Eurostar services as a potential milch cow with which to fund the construction of the line. But will the cow ever produce milk?

EPS, the company that operates Eurostar and is owned jointly by the French and Belgian railways and L&C, is now benefiting from the marketing expertise of two of L&C's partners, Virgin and National Express. There are lots of good ideas. On July 1, EPS launched its first direct trains to DisneyLand Paris from Waterloo. It has also begun running a 4.53am train to Paris aimed at giving business travellers the opportunity to make a 9.30am meeting in the French capital. There is a winter there to be direct trains to the ski resorts of the Savoie in France. While all this is innovative, and will ensure better use of the trains, it is not enough to turn the cow into a milk producer.

Eurostar is dogged by the fact that all its trains are 777 seaters, which is like an airline running only planes the size of two Jumbo jets on every flight. Unlike its TGV equivalents, the trains cannot be split, and on the Brus-

Cardiff, Manchester and Glasgow – will start running through the tunnel to a variety of destinations in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. These trains are a result of a political promise made by ministers to provincial MPs a decade ago, at the time of the passing of the Channel Tunnel legislation, and are bound to lose a fortune. There is no market for such long-distance rail travel given that airlines offer such cheap seats and are, of course, much faster.

Worst of all, Eurostar faces massive competition. The airlines have reduced fares and the ferry companies and Le Shuttle are in the midst of a crazy price war. While Eurostar is by far the best product, if fares over or under the Channel and in the air are so cheap, it will be hard pressed to make much money. Already, since its launch, its ticket prices have tumbled. Students can get a return to Paris for as little as £49 and even premium fares aimed at business people have been slashed.

I don't want to seem churlish about the Channel Tunnel. It is good for Britain, good for Europe. I love the Eurostar trains. But so far, with the failure of freight and Eurostar struggling, one has to ask whether the massive amounts of capital spent on the project might have been better invested in the domestic rail system.

Certainly, not all the money has been spent wisely. In a sane world, the wonderful Waterloo station would not have been built and the high-speed Channel Tunnel rail link between St Pancras station and Folkestone would have been ready in time for the opening of the tunnel. The trains would also have been more flexible and cheaper. There would have been fewer crazy security restrictions which irritate passengers, such as the time when much delayed passengers from Paris to London, who had transferred from a broken down train, were turned out for an hour at Lille so that their baggage could be put through a machine.

At the time of the announcement of L&C's successful bid to build the Channel Tunnel rail link (CTRL), it seemed the offer was generous. The company was given the EPS trains – worth a cool £990m – lots of land around St Pancras and east London, and a £1.4bn grant, all to build a link costing £3bn. However, looking at it now, getting the link built is going to be tight. There is no guarantee that the link can be built under this deal. The key question is, even with the Virgin expertise, will Eurostar ever generate enough cash to ensure that CTRL will happen? Gordon Brown – should he be our next Chancellor – is going to face some tricky demands over this one.

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR



Eurostar faces massive competition from airlines and ferries

two and a half hours by the construction of the Belgian high-speed line, there will still be an awful lot of bumpy seas on the Brussels services.

Worse is to come. Early next year overnight sleeper and daytime trains from places such as Plymouth,

BoE to beef up banking supervision

PETER RODGERS
Financial Editor

The Bank of England will today complete an overhaul of banking supervision resulting from the Barings crisis by announcing plans to beef up and enlarge its supervision department and establish a high-level quality assurance unit.

The plans emerge a day after a Commons Select Committee was told by Ian Hopkins, the former treasurer of Barings Investment Bank, that he had repeatedly warned of poor supervisory controls at Barings, but been ignored by Peter Norris, his boss.

Mr Hopkins also described "turf wars", shouting matches and table banging in discussions of supervisory issues with other Barings senior staff, and

claimed that if his plans for improvements had not been obstructed the group might have been saved.

The Bank of England is basing its wide ranging new supervisory reorganisation on a report commissioned last October from Arthur Andersen, the chartered accountants. The Banking Act annual report in May said supervisory and surveillance staff numbers would rise from 384 this February to 391 next February, but further increases are likely.

A significant attempt to improve the standing of the supervision department has already been foreshadowed by Howard Davies, the Deputy Governor, who has suggested all the

Bank's high flyers spend some time in the department, whose morale crashed after Barings.

The Banking Act report said Arthur Andersen was comparing the supervision department with other regulators in the UK and abroad, interviewing a wide range of banks, studying the way bank staff use their time and examining recruitment, staff retention and training, and levels of qualification.

Part of the review's brief was to set out clear objectives for supervision, it added.

Arthur Andersen was asked to draw up recommendations for an independent and high-powered quality assurance unit to watch over the supervision department, to ensure policies are

implemented and to identify where they need to be reviewed.

This was based on a proposal in the report on Barings last year by the Board of Banking Supervision (Bobs). Part of the new Arthur Andersen-designed system was given a trial run in March. It is one of only two of the Bobs' 17 recommendations yet to be implemented.

At the select committee, Mr Hopkins said he believed the Bank of England supervisors should be more interventionist but he reserved more blame for the Securities and Futures Authority, saying: "I see the regulatory failure on the SFA side rather than the Bank of England side."

Mr Hopkins, with Ron Bak-

er, is one of two former Barings executives fighting disciplinary proceedings by the SFA.

Mr Hopkins insisted that he had told Mr Norris of problems in reconciling accounting balances at Barings in October 1994. Committee members pointed out that Mr Norris, who has been disciplined and suspended by the SFA, had claimed ignorance of these key signals until February 1995, just before the collapse.

Mr Hopkins said he told Mr Norris a regional treasurer should be based in Hong Kong at a cost of £200,000 a year. This, he believed, would have prevented the problems escalating, but he had been turned down on grounds of cost.

He said there was a "hidden agenda" because the individual he had in mind for the job was from the banking side of Barings and not the securities operation.

Mr Hopkins said he had discovered persistent breaches of Baring Securities foreign exchange exposure limits, which were exceeded by 100 per cent for most of a year, but he expressed puzzlement that when the Bank of England was told it had taken no action.

Mr Hopkins said when he had first flagged the foreign exchange problem at a meeting at Barings he was "shouted down by everyone in the room saying there's no currency risk".

When he was moved from the

bank to the securities arm of Barings in September 1994, Mr Hopkins said he found "anything but a well run organisation". On the risk management side, he was left with "somebody who had been in the organisation for three months plus a temp".

But senior management did not listen to his verbal and written demands for more resources. Mr Hopkins cited in particular Mr Norris, who had been running the business for two years and "took my comments as being critical of the structure he put in place".

He added that James Bax, head of the Far East operations, was also "sensitive to problems emerging on his home patch and wanting to look after them by himself".

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BA tie-up causes rift over EU rules

CHRIS GODSMARK
Business Correspondent

There were signs of a rift between the British government and the European Commission last night over who should investigate the proposed alliance between British Airways and American Airlines. The President of the Board of Trade, Ian Lang, said he was altering the law to enable UK authorities to examine the deal under EC competition rules. The DTI said the move, which does not need to be referred to Parliament, would be made by the end of the week.

It threatens to challenge the European Commission's ongoing investigation into the alliance, and other similar tie-ups between European and US carriers including United Airlines and Lufthansa, and Northwest and KLM.

But Mr Lang said yesterday: "I have concluded that I have a duty to consider the proposed alliance... I believe this will increase the possibility of reaching an early decision to provide all concerned, including third parties, with the maximum legal certainty."

DTI officials will now conduct an in-house investigation under EC law, which will run in parallel with the existing inquiry by the Office of Fair Trading. The OFT is investigating whether the alliance effectively amounts to a merger despite the lack of any equity stake by either firm. The US Department of Justice is also conducting an investigation under American anti-trust rules.

The tie-up involves British Airways and American Airlines pooling revenues, marketing and ticket sales. It would give the combined group around 60 per cent of flights between Heathrow and the US and raise their share of the market on some routes to 100 per cent. Rivals, including Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic, United Airlines, Delta and Continental are bitterly opposed to the deal.

BA wants combined service to start next April, but has feared the EC probe would cause a substantial delay. The airline had argued that the Commission had no power to examine alliances with other carriers outside the European Union.

A BA spokesman said: "This is a welcome development. It clarifies the legal position over which competition authority on this side of the Atlantic has competency in this matter and gives a clear indication that the review will be conducted speedily."

But experts in EC law doubted whether Mr Lang had the power to overtake the EC's inquiry. "The DTI is trying to get in first and claim the patch from the EC," said Ulrich Bourke, a partner with City solicitors Clifford Chance. "There will now be a jurisdictional battle between the UK government and the EC."

NAO backs overhaul of regulators

MICHAEL HARRISON

The National Audit Office yesterday gave its effective backing to a root-and-branch review of the way Britain's privatised gas, water, electricity and telecoms industries are regulated.

In a hard-hitting 360-page report the NAO raised questions about the use of price caps to regulate the four industries, whether the individual regulators should be made more accountable, whether they had struck the right balance between shareholder and consumer interests and whether they should be replaced by boards of regulators.

The report from Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor General and head of the NAO, comes at a critical time for utility regulation with two of the four watchdogs — Clarendon Spottiswoode of Gas and Don Crickshank of Ofwat locked in disputes with British Gas and BT respectively that could result in both companies being referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee has also just announced a wide-ranging inquiry into the role and performance of the regulators. Sir John's report points out that Ms Spottiswoode, Mr Crickshank, the water regulator Ian Bryant and the electricity regulator Professor Stephen Littchfield, are responsible for industries with 25 million customers, assets of £20bn and annual turnover of £51bn representing 8 per cent of Britain's total gross domestic output.

He stresses that while it is not for the NAO to question the

policy objectives of regulation, it is a matter of public interest to illuminate how the regulators have handled their portfolios.

Sir John says there are a number of issues which Parliament "may wish to consider" concerning both the way the regulators work and the way the policy is implemented. Echoing a criticism that has been widely levelled at the regulator regime, the report questions whether alternatives to industry specific regulation by single regulators should be looked at asking whether boards of regulators would "be a sensible insurance against the over-concentration of power in one pair of hands" or whether they would dilute effective decision making.

The report also asks whether there is a case for widening application procedures against regulatory decisions to include consumers and whether there is not scope for increasing the openness of the four regulators to public scrutiny such as through public hearings in order to develop their accountability and legitimacy.

Sir John also queries whether the regulators are sufficiently effective in communicating their decisions and the reasons for them.

He asks whether there is a case for bringing in staff with specific expertise in individual regulating industries.

Meanwhile, the price formula used in all four industries — whereby bills are capped by RPI less a certain percentage — is questioned. The NAO asks whether it is the best method of putting monopolistic suppliers under pressure to improve efficiency.

NAO backs overhaul of regulators



In a bind: The company blames a drop in orders from W H Smith and a poor showing in the US for its current predicament. Photograph: Andrew Buurma

Filofax shares slump stuns stock market

NIGEL COPE

Filofax, the maker of the personal organisers that were once a symbol of the yuppie boom, shocked the stock market yesterday when it issued a calamitous profits warning only weeks after reporting a sharp increase in profits along with an upbeat statement for the current year.

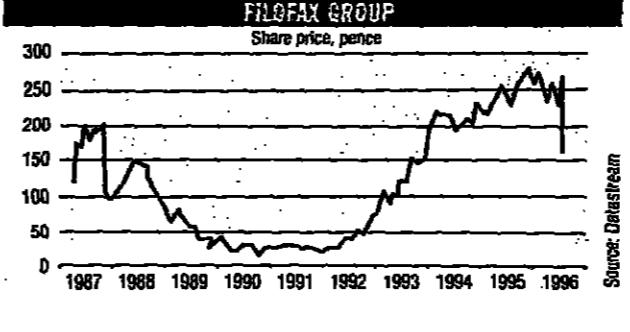
Filofax shares slumped 39 per cent to 165p when the company said its first half profits would not reach the £2.9m achieved in the same period last year.

The company blamed the warning on a series of problems including an expected cut in or-

ders from W H Smith, its largest customer, W H Smith, which is undergoing a big restructuring under a new chief executive, is moving to a swifter ordering system that will enable it to reduce its level of stocks.

Other problems are in the US where growth has failed to match expectations even though the company has invested in expensive display systems in stores. Filofax is also experiencing lower demand from some overseas agents such as in Japan.

Filofax now expects to make profits of £2m in the first half, compared to last year's £2.9m. The shortfall is unlikely to be made up in the second half. An-



Source: Datamonitor

alysts have slashed their full year forecast from £8.2m to £5.7m.

The tone of the statement and its timing caused consternation in the City and even dismayed its own broker, Hoare

Govett. Andy Bowers of Hoare Govett said: "It does seem quite incredible that this could happen. It seems a coincidence of misfortunes over the last couple of weeks."

The timing of the statement is certain to anger shareholders, due to attend the company's annual meeting on Thursday.

Robin Field, Filofax chief executive, said he accepted the group's credibility might take a knock as a result of the warning but added: "Things haven't gone wrong. We are just anticipating that they might. We have learnt over backwards to speak to people as early and as openly as possible and I would hope we might get some credit for that." On the timing of the announcement, he said it was difficult to evaluate events early in the year, typically a slow period for the group.

Comment, page 17

Glaxo lifted by new Aids drug

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Glaxo Wellcome took a tighter grip on the potentially huge market for Aids treatments yesterday after it abandoned trials on a drug, Epivir, because of its apparently high levels of effectiveness. An independent panel said the trial should end to allow participants receiving a placebo to start taking Epivir.

Epivir, which is approved in the US and awaiting approval in Europe, is one of two leading Aids treatments now made by Glaxo Wellcome. It also manufactures Retrovir, which is also known as AZT.

Glaxo's shares jumped 20.5p, or 2 per cent, to 915.10p as the market focused on the potential profits that might flow from the company's dominance of such an important therapeutic area.

Glaxo said yesterday the independent Data and Safety Monitoring Board had recommended that the experiment be abandoned after late stage trials because the panel had found a 54 per cent reduction in the rate of progression in Aids patients compared with the placebo.

It is usual practice to abandon trials of drugs for life-threatening diseases for ethical reasons when it has become clear that their effectiveness

exceeds expectations. A similar trial conducted by SmithKline Beecham was abandoned recently after it became evident that its treatment, Coreg, was unexpectedly effective in treating congestive heart failure.

The end of the trial does not mean automatic approval for the drug. In SmithKline's case the Food and Drug Administration, the US pharmaceuticals watchdog, asked for further research to prove the drug's efficacy.

Glaxo's trial of Epivir started in March 1995 and was scheduled to last for two years, ending next March. Involving nearly 2,000 patients, the trial combined Epivir with Retrovir.

He added: "Today's news is reinforcing in people's minds that the Aids market is changing and that Glaxo is in an extremely strong position to be the biggest beneficiary of it."

SmithKline Beecham pointed cold water yesterday on speculation that it was poised for a major acquisition following the consolidation earlier this year of two types of equity into one share class.

The move might have been a prelude to a rights issue funding deal, but Jan Leschly, chief executive, said the company planned to concentrate on organic growth following two large acquisitions in 1993.

He was speaking as the drugs and consumer healthcare group announced better than expected second-quarter profits of £42.4m, up from £30m in the

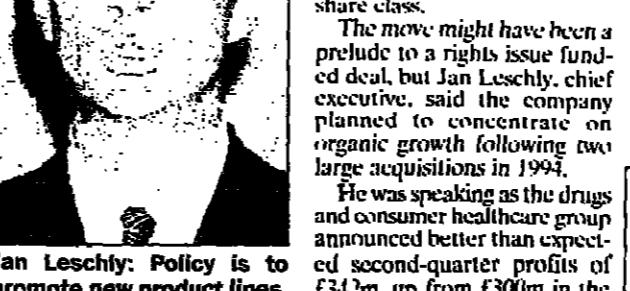
same period last year. The rise in profits was driven, the company said, by sales growth mainly from new products accounting for almost a third of the pharmaceutical sales. These products, which include Serotil, an anti-depressant drug that saw sales rise 59 per cent, form part of a drive by SmithKline to generate more than a quarter of its sales from products that did not exist five years ago.

New products sales reached £370m during the quarter, up 40

per cent at comparable exchange rates. In the first six months these kinds of treatments were worth £702m, a 37 per cent rise on the first half of 1995.

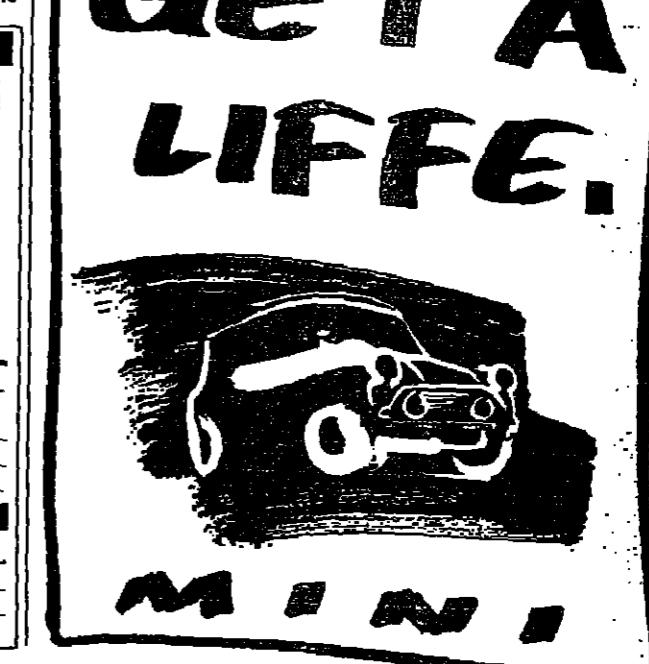
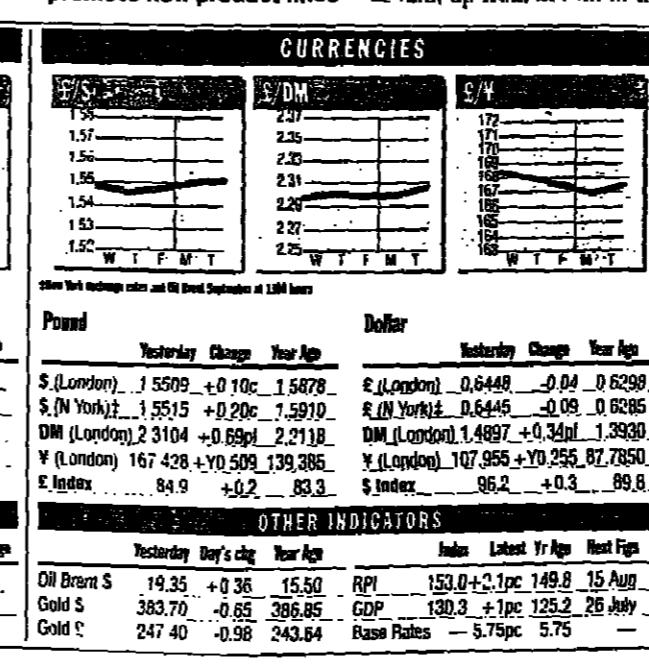
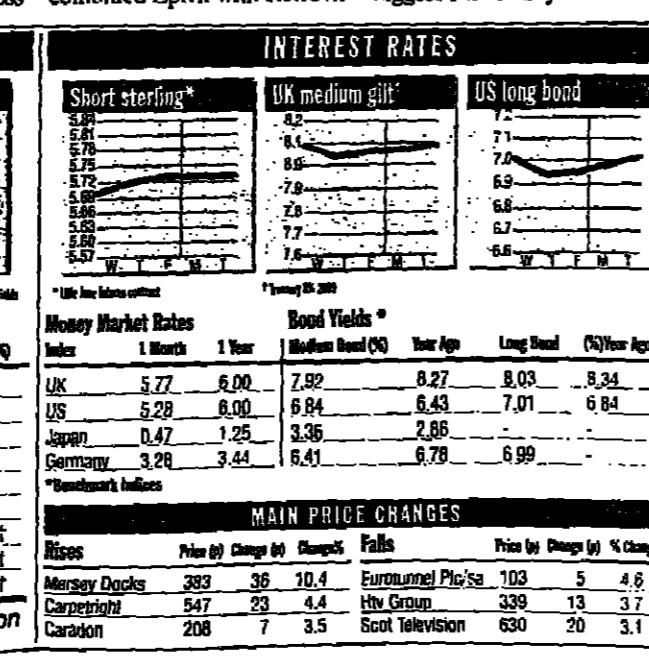
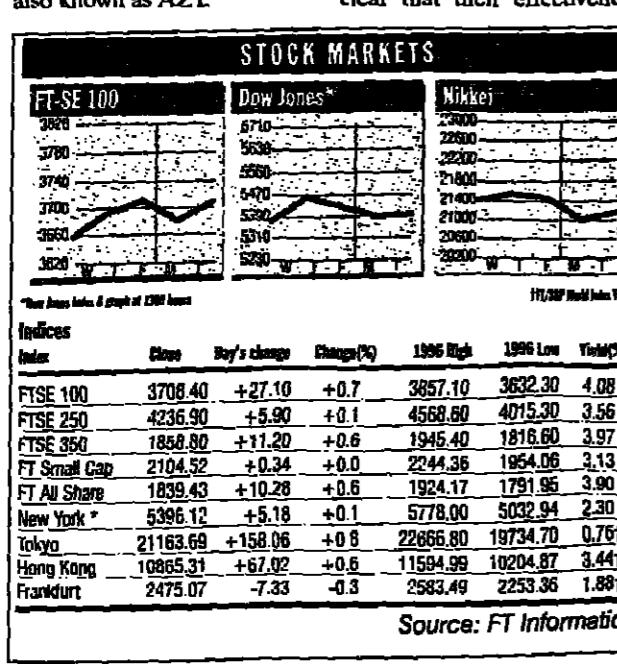
Both sales and trading profits from consumer healthcare products also saw a rise, of 22 per cent. SmithKline increased its exposure to consumer brands with the acquisition two years ago of Sterling Winthrop's consumer operations.

Investment column, page 18.



TOM STEVENSON

SmithKline concentrates on organic growth



Source: FT Information

pring

business



COMMENT

The company seems positively to revel in being castigated for behaving in a manner which is "predatory, deplorable and against the public interest", as the MMC concluded last August'

Railways will be no Wild West for Stagecoach

Brian Souter, the executive chairman of Stagecoach, was in characteristically ebullient and aggressive mood yesterday, forecasting that by the end of the decade his bus and rail empire would be four times its present size and turning over a cool £2bn. Whichever way you look at it that is a lot of off-peak savers and short city hops for Mr Souter and his sister, Ann Gloag, who started the business 25 years ago with £25,000 in redundancy pay and just two coaches plying the London-Dundee route.

Why shouldn't they be bullish about the future? After all, Stagecoach has just announced record pre-tax profits of £44m and its share price is riding high, valuing the company at some £720m against its flotation price three years ago of £100m?

Since it began life in 1980 Stagecoach has collected small bus companies at the same rate as it has attracted investigations by the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission but that has not stunted its growth. Indeed the company seems positively to revel in being castigated for behaving in a manner which is "predatory, deplorable and against the public interest" as the MMC concluded last August after investigating its activities in Darlington.

Before executives at those few remaining independent bus operators don their full body armour, Mr Souter would like to point out that the exponential growth he

is forecasting will come not from gobbling up yet more bus companies. Stagecoach has decided that the bus market will be too expensive and that the fancy price-tags being commanded are no longer justified.

Instead he intends to grow the business through overseas expansion and the acquisition of more passenger rail franchises to add to South West Trains, which Stagecoach took over from BR in February.

It is easy to see why Stagecoach is attracted by rail. The upfront outlay is minimal since track, trains and stations are leased and it would take incompetence on a grand scale not to run the franchises more efficiently and profitably than BR even with smaller subsidies.

Although it is still early days, the evidence thus far is that Stagecoach is making a decent fist of South West Trains. But so it ought to with the biggest commuter rail franchise in Europe and one that probably carries more opinion formers, high ranking civil servants and top bankers into central London than any other railway.

And yet why do the doubts linger? Well, for a start Stagecoach will need to achieve some spectacular growth in overseas markets which last year accounted for just £50m of turnover but are slated to bring in £700m in four years time.

Second, Stagecoach will need to win a good number of the 10 remaining passenger franchises, all of which it intends

to bid for. Even then lines such as the South East Trains, for which it is a short-listed bidder, are not of the same quality as South West Trains and suffer from much older rolling stock. The probability is that it will end up having to buy franchises from other operators.

Finally there is the question of regulation and what a future Labour government might do. In the bus industry Stagecoach might be confronted with an Ofbus empowered to cap fares and break up local monopolies while the rail industry is already regulated.

The deregulation of the bus market might have created something akin to the Wild West and Stagecoach may have had fun riding roughshod over the competition but the rail industry will not be quite the same proposition.

Stable doors are slamming hard this week. Today, the Bank of England will put the finishing touches to its new supervisory structure, based on a review by the consultants Arthur Andersen.

So much work has gone into this over the last nine months that we can be sure it will be state of the art stuff. It will certainly need to be far more than a reshuffling of the management pack.

One of the biggest problems the Bank of England has faced is to rebuild the

morale and motivation of the supervision department, and that means as a first priority making the best use of the resources it has got, rather than hiring hundreds of accountants to check returns from banks.

The other slam came from the Securities and Futures Authority's, whose enforcement committee yesterday debated a set of new rules designed to catch the bosses rather than just senior managers next time there is a serious scandal.

They could be dubbed the Peter Baring and Andrew Tuckey rules, since they have evolved from the SFA's quite natural embarrassment that these two top bankers escaped formal censure by the SFA earlier this year over their roles running Barings.

The underlying problem of supervision is that however well the Bank of England and the SFA run their own supervision departments, communication between different regulatory bodies around the world remains the biggest difficulty of all.

As the copper crisis has demonstrated, no matter how many international cooperation agreements the regulators sign, there will always be some serious problems that fall between the cracks.

stoner by any standards, but coming just five weeks after the company was talking bullish about a good year and hitting the acquisition trail it looks even worse.

The real issue here is whether the company's problems are just an unfortunate collection of one-offs or symptoms of a deeper malaise which the move away from the yuppie and towards the housewife market has failed to address.

It is true that the expected cut in orders from WH Smiths says more about the retailer than it does about Filofax. Smiths is keen to reduce products in some ranges but this is more about de-stocking than not stocking at all. Smiths is moving towards a new ordering system that will enable "just in time" deliveries so it can cut inventories. After this sudden blip, orders should pick up again.

Filofax's problems in America and Japan are of more concern. The US slowdown has not really been explained and the company has invested heavily in expensive display system in shops. The sudden halt in orders from Japan also seems odd. Filofax chief executive Robin Field insists the problems are short term and that the markets have not gone away. Investors may prefer to remember Filofax's previous collapse in 1989 brought on by high costs, erratic sourcing and a brand that was deemed tired and expensive and wonder whether history is not repeating itself.

Manufacturers see start of recovery

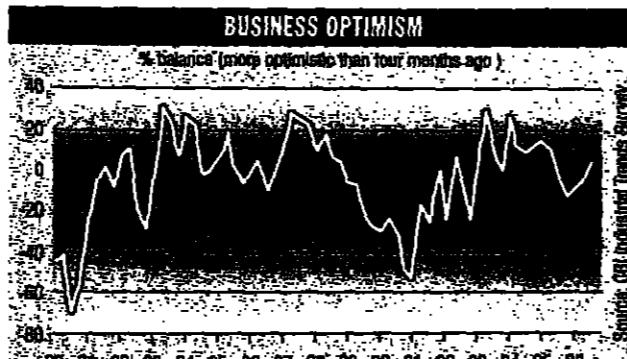
DIANE COYLE

Economics Editor

Manufacturing industry is on the road to recovery, with business confidence increasing for the first time in over a year. Yet manufacturers expect to hold prices steady as their costs fall.

Reporting these upbeat results in its quarterly survey yesterday, the Confederation of British Industry said there was no need for another interest rate cut, and that the pick-up in manufacturing strengthened the case for a cautious budget.

Andrew Buxton, chairman of the CBI's economic affairs committee, said strong growth in output was not a foregone conclusion. But he said: "The interest rate reductions have, with hindsight, been justified.



They have created a situation where people start to feel a bit better and spend more."

City experts shared this cautious optimism. "The survey tells us that manufacturing has turned the corner. The one

weak area of the economy no longer seems to need any extra stimulus," said Mike Dicks, UK economist at investment bank Lehman Brothers.

The survey, along with a remarkably successful £2bn gilt auction, helped the pound rise nearly a pence to £M2.3108.

Business optimism rose in the four months to July, the first rise since April 1995. The trend in optimism in the CBI survey is one of the best leading indicators of growth in the economy.

A balance of 6 per cent of manufacturers said output rose rather than fell in the four months to July, compared with a zero balance in the April survey. The balance of manufacturers expecting output to increase in the next four months rose from 12 per cent to 22 per cent, the strongest figure recorded in a quarterly survey since October 1988.

Orders have improved, but more slowly than respondents expected. Domestic orders were virtually flat, although there was an increase in the consumer goods sector. Export orders

picked up modestly. As with output, both home and export orders are expected to pick up sharply. But Mr Buxton warned that manufacturers' expectations have been disappointed for the past year.

Activity is picking up, but prices fell in the latest four months for the first time in more than two years. Firms expect domestic prices to remain stable, and export prices to fall at the fastest rate since 1961. They also foresee the fastest fall in their unit costs since 1958 during the next four months.

A less rosy aspect of the survey is the finding that manufacturing employment fell faster over the past four months, with 16 per cent of firms cutting jobs — a similar fall is expected in the next four months. Moreover,

stocks of finished goods increased slightly.

David Hillier, an economist at brokers BZW, said: "If firms are still adjusting job levels and stocks are still high, we are going to get patchy data for the next few months." Simon Briscoe at Nikko Europe said:

"The Chancellor should consider cutting interest rates while manufacturing is in this weak."

However, most City analysts concluded yesterday that the improvements recorded in the CBI survey, which follows upbeat surveys from Purchasing Managers and British Chambers of Commerce, rule out a cut in base rates at the end of this month. Only unexpectedly weak figures for retail sales would excuse ignoring the signs of an upturn in manufacturing.

Inquiry ends as BSkyB agrees on pay-TV deal

MATTHEW HORSMAN

Media Editor

The Office of Fair Trading will this morning confirm it has reached undertakings with BSkyB, the satellite broadcast giant, ending months of speculation about the regulation of the pay-TV market in the UK.

As a result of the undertakings, BSkyB's position in the market will not be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. BSkyB has made what some observers said last night were minor concessions on the way it "bundles" programming, including movies and sport, for distribution to cable operators. The changes will enable cable companies to "re-tier" their basic package of channels taking fewer Sky services without sacrificing discounts.

John Bridgeman, the director general of the OFT, is believed to have been persuaded that the growth of the cable industry has not been unduly threatened by alleged monopolistic behaviour by the market leader.

But Mr Bridgeman will petition the Restrictive Practices Court to accelerate its case against BSkyB and the Premier League, which have signed an exclusive broadcasting agreement for top football. The OFT wants all statements from the defendants to be delivered by 15 October, rather than a month later, citing public interest issues.

The news emerged as BSkyB yesterday confirmed the appointment of Elisabeth Murdoch, the daughter of 40 per cent owner Rupert Murdoch, to the board. Ms Murdoch, who earlier this year was appointed general manager, broadcasting, will be deputy for her father and two other News Corporation executives when they are unable to attend board meetings.

It is understood that Ms

Murdoch's experience as the manager of two television stations in the US, both of them linked to Mr Murdoch's Fox Network, was the main reason for her appointment.

Ms Murdoch's arrival at BSkyB fuelled speculation that she was being groomed to take over eventually from her father. For the past few months, she has been directly involved in both programme distribution and dish installation operations at BSkyB, and attends key strategy sessions with Sam Chisholm, chief executive, and David Chance, deputy managing director.

Ms Murdoch, who has declined all requests for interviews, reports directly to Mr Chisholm and Mr Chance. She is one of two Murdoch children to hold senior positions at News Corporation companies. Her brother Lachlan heads up the Australian operations of the parent company.

Insiders deny there are any plans to reshuffle the top jobs at BSkyB, despite industry rumours that Mr Chisholm may begin to spend more time in Australia, where News Corp's Foxtel television venture has been having trouble.

With the OFT inquiry behind it, BSkyB is expected to concentrate on growing its European business, primarily through a joint venture with Bavarian mogul Leo Kirch, and to complete preparations for the launch of new channels, including some pay-per-view services, in the autumn.

But media analysts warned last night the company could still face regulatory pressures from Brussels, where competition authorities are watching developments in the pay-TV market in the UK and elsewhere in Europe.

Market Report, page 19

Davies warns over downsizing

ROGER TRAPP

Howard Davies, deputy governor of the Bank of England, yesterday added his voice to the growing criticism of "downsizing".

Mr Davies, a former director general of the Confederation of British Industry, told the Institute of Management's annual conference lunch in London that in following US companies down this road, "we may have backed ourselves into a corner". In particular, there was a "danger of communicating mixed and confusing statements".

Every company said its employees were its greatest asset, "but when the chips were down" it readily reduced the size of those resources, he added. That confusion was not likely to create the state of mind that would bring the improved performance being sought.

The problem stemmed from what he believed were several generally accepted but con-

flicting principles. Among these were the realisation that the changing business environment had created a need for different skills and the end of the cradle-to-grave employment contract, and the idea that meeting the obligation to train employees gave most companies a loyal and more productive workforce.

Stephen Roach, the Wall Street economist whose change of mind on downsizing initiated the current debate, had asked whether the resurgence in productivity had put too great a strain on employees and could lead to a labour backlash. That could happen here, he said.

Pointing out that legislative interference in such matters did not generally work, he said companies should be looking to develop their employees to give them "lifelong employability if not employment". Certain companies, such as Unipart, with its internal "university", were moving in this direction.



Howard Davies: Firms should offer lifelong employability

Salomon leaps ahead with record earnings in first half

DANIELLE ROBINSON

New York

Salomon Brothers yesterday became the latest Wall Street firm to stun investors with much better than expected earnings, reporting a \$29m (£183m) net profit in the second quarter ending 30 June, from a \$60m loss in the corresponding period.

Added to a \$276m net profit during the first three months of the year, Salomon reaped its most profitable first half in its history, with net profits of \$567m. Its results, far exceeding analysts' expectations, placed it among a long list of top Wall Street firms reporting record first-half net earnings.

Perrin Long, a veteran secu-

rities industry analyst, and private consultant to investment firms, said: "The results for most of the companies have been very favourable compared to results ending June 1995."

However, he warned that the first half could be followed by a gloomier final six months of the year. First-half results were boosted by a booming stock

market as more than \$115bn poured into equity mutual funds, and US corporates embarked on a mergers and acquisitions frenzy.

"The primary strength was in equity underwriting, and mergers and acquisitions activity, which made up for a pull-back in fixed income underwriting," said Sally Krawcheck, securities

industry analyst at Sanford C Bernstein in New York.

However, analysts also argue that the stock market correction in the first weeks of July radically changed the equity underwriting picture. "With the stock market so volatile, along with the uncertainty about interest rates, I feel that the [equity] underwriting pipeline has

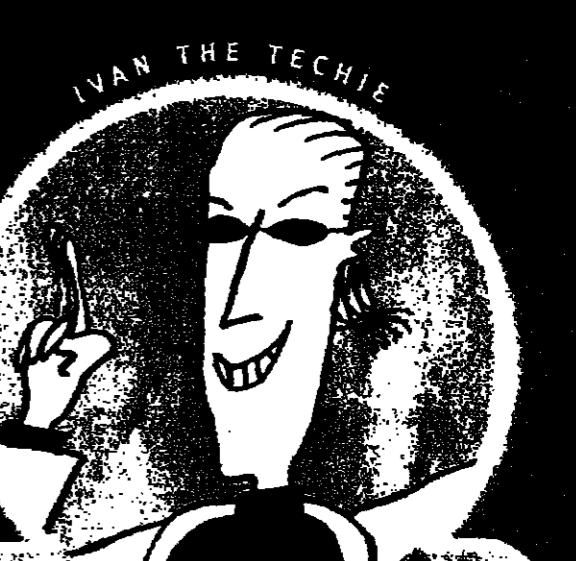
MERCURY
0500 500 400

**"SPEED KILLS
...YOUR COMPETITORS."**

"Is your company on

Mercury's

network?



SmithKline learns new tricks

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

It was hardly surprising that SmithKline Beecham's shares should pause for breath this year. Over the course of 1994 and 1995 they doubled, sending the market value of the drugs manufacturer up to a daunting £20bn. The highly fashion-conscious pharmaceuticals sector was, by the beginning of 1996, very much in again and SB one of its favoured members.

Figures for the first six months of the year were at the top end of expectations with a strong second quarter making up for a less impressive first term. In the three months to June sales rose 17 per cent to £1.92bn while pre-tax profits climbed 14 per cent to £42m and earnings per share of 8.3p were 12 per cent up on the previous year.

That was a creditable performance given the dynamics of the drugs industry, which remain far from ideal. After the fat years of the 1980s, pharmaceuticals companies have had to learn new strategies to cope with a trading environment in which price rises in the largest, most mature markets are nigh on impossible to achieve.

Jan Lesczy, chief executive, described the pricing environment in Europe yesterday as "pretty traumatic", with pressure on governments' spending plans compounded by arbitrary tax squeezes in some countries. In the US matching inflation is considered a real achievement while the Japanese have learnt to keep a tight lid on healthcare costs.

To make money in this giant, but competitive and highly regulated market, companies have been forced to concentrate much more than they ever had to on innovation, on geographical diversification into young markets such as Latin America and Eastern Europe, and on diversity of income streams. SmithKline has performed well in all three areas.

Rather against the trend two years ago, the acquisition of Sterling SuntSB deeper into the toothpaste and nicotine-patch consumer end of the market. With profit growing 22 per cent in that division, the deal is looking better and better. Clinical Laboratories and DPS, a US pharmaceutical benefit manager, are less obviously successful sidelines.

The key to SB, however, at more than three-quarters of profits, remains the prescription drugs arm, where new products continue to drive profits growth. Almost a third of sales come from drugs that did not exist five years ago, essential in a business where market share and margins literally implode when patent protection runs out.

So that is all the good news. The bad is that it is all in the price. With full-year forecasts of just over £1.5bn receiving

only minor upgrades yesterday, the shares stand on a prospective p/e ratio of 19. Compared to a forecast growth rate in low double digits that leaves no scope for further growth in the short run.

An illusion at Euro Disney

In the Magic Kingdom of Euro Disney nothing is ever quite what it seems. And so it is with the debt-laden theme park's latest set of results. At first glance the results look encouraging and appear to show that last year's 20 per cent price cut really is enticing more punters through the gates.

Though net profits in the three months to June fell from last year's Frf170m (£21.8m) to Frf147m, the previous year's figure was inflated by Frf79m of exceptional items. In addition, operating revenue from the park and hotels edged 4.5 per cent higher over the quarter to Frf1.4bn. All this means that the nine months the company cut net losses to Frf1.2m, compared with Frf71m.

But Euro Disney is faced with a difficult French economy, with high unemployment and a strong franc, which makes the park expensive for visitors

in the same period last year.

But there is more to these figures than meets the eye. Euro Disney's revenue was increased dramatically from last summer when it introduced the new Space Mountain ride. The third-quarter year-on-year comparison is still benefiting from the new ride but that will drop out of the figures soon and some analysts are expecting only a flat performance in the final quarter.

In addition, the company is still benefiting from graduated interest payments and a holiday on management fees and royalty payments until 1999-2000. The company needs to go some if it is to reach break-even by the time it returns to full payments.

The company says it plans new attractions, such as a Planet Hollywood restaurant, a new cinema and a shopping mall, which will attract more visitors. Admissions are on an upward trend with hotel occupancy encouraging, even though no fresh figures have been released.

But Euro Disney is faced with a difficult French economy, with high unemployment and a strong franc, which makes the park expensive for visitors

from countries such as Britain and Italy. According to Nigel Reed of Paribas, the current value of Euro Disney shares might be just Frf2, even as summing it can increase revenue by 30 per cent over the next four years.

Analysts are forecasting full-year profits of Frf184m. But with the interest and royalty payments looming the shares - down 7p to 164p - still look unattractive.

Mitie keeps on growing

Mitie is the growth stock par excellence. Yesterday's 38 per cent jump in pre-tax profits for the year to March from £4.6m to £6.3m was the seventh successive rise of more than 30 per cent, confirming that the cleaning, engineering and property services company's remarkable growth story remains intact.

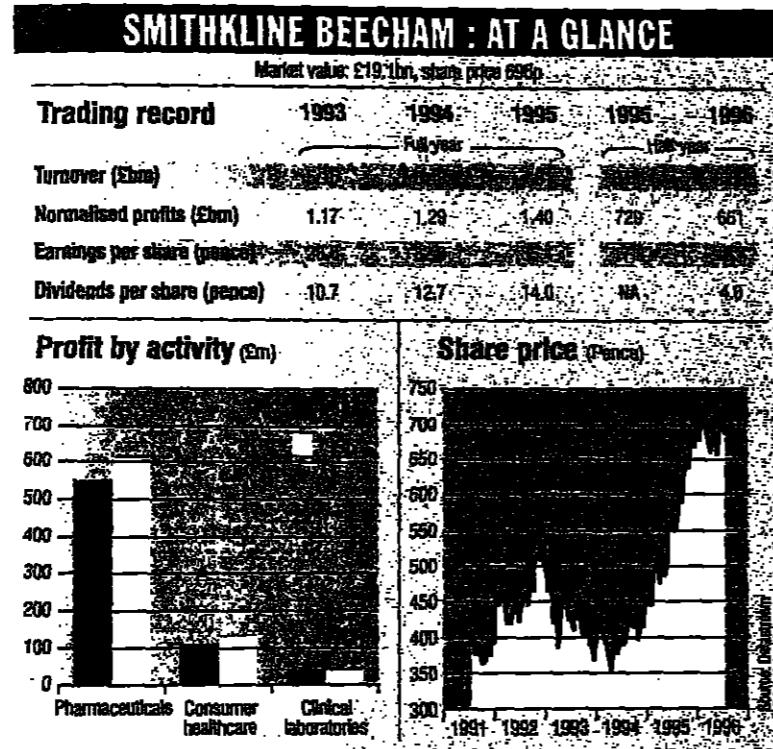
After a 33 per cent rise in earnings per share to 16.2p, the dividend was increased by a similar margin, but still remained four-times covered at 4p (3p).

Mitie provides a range of services to property owners, whether in the private sector, such as BT, IBM and British Aerospace, all big clients, or government departments such as the Treasury, which buys engineering maintenance from the company. Engineering accounts for 40 per cent of sales, as does cleaning, with painting chipping in another 20 per cent.

It hardly sounds glamorous work, but the contracts Mitie signs its customers up to are typically long (between one and five years) and so predictable, the company ties up little capital (hence its great return) and is highly cash generative.

Sales, which have grown from about £10m in 1989 to more than £160m last year, are set to continue growing for three main reasons. The market for outsourced services is growing as companies and the public sector concentrate on their core activities. Mitie is gaining critical mass and it has enormous scope to grow market share, to spread into new regions and to add new services.

Mitie's shares have faltered recently, coming back from a peak of 415p last month in line with a jittery market, and possibly reflecting concerns over a minimum wage which, if introduced by an incoming Labour government, could increase costs noticeably. Mainly, however, the market has simply started to jib at paying 18-times prospective earnings, even for a company with such an excellent track record. Fair enough in the short term but this is a good long-term hold.



Dockers to continue Mersey campaign

CHRIS GODSMARK

Business Correspondent

Sacked Liverpool dockers yesterday vowed to continue their campaign of unofficial industrial action against Mersey Docks and Harbour Company after it announced that it had won back a big contract lost during the 10-month long dispute.

The key to SB, however, at more than three-quarters of profits, remains the prescription drugs arm, where new products continue to drive profits growth. Almost a third of sales come from drugs that did not exist five years ago, essential in a business where market share and margins literally implode when patent protection runs out.

So that is all the good news. The bad is that it is all in the price. With full-year forecasts of just over £1.5bn receiving

Contract winner: Mersey Docks chief Trevor Furlong

of Mersey's largest customers, pulled out of the Docks a month ago, ending its container services to and from America's east coast.

ACL blamed the move on sympathy action by US dockers in the International.

Earlier this year the Transport and General Workers Union negotiated a deal giving former employees redundancy payments of up to £25,000. But the union rejected the deal. When Atlantic Container Line pulled out on 21 June, Mersey Docks withdrew the redundancy offer.

Yesterday Mersey Docks said

that its contract with ACL would resume today, a situation regarded by Atlantic's president, Bernhard Ryding, as "sensitive". Ex-employees coordinating the dispute accused Mersey Docks of pulling out on 21 June.

Bobby Morton, a former steward, said, "ACL only left the port temporarily. It's come as no surprise to us they've made this announcement, and we won't change our campaign to get our jobs back." He said ACL

was planning on having two container cargo leave the docks this morning. "Immediately we find the destination of these ships we will take appropriate action. We've had many messages of support from international unions."

Mersey Docks insisted business had returned to normal and that the dispute was winding down. A spokesman said productivity had risen by 30 to 40 per cent in the new labour force hired after the sackings.

Working practices and administrative processes within both offices have been reviewed "to support and sustain future expansion", a spokesman said. Staff associations were kept informed of the review and staff were told of the changes today.

The Independent Union of Mersey Staff and the Mersey Staff Association, which jointly represent 85 per cent of staff, said they had secured important agreements with the society.

Ged Nichols, IJHS general secretary, said: "The unions fully comprehend the commercial needs of the Mersey but

we have continually asserted that individuals must not be flattened by the march of progress."

"We have, therefore, taken every step possible to protect our members' future."

Clive Webster, LSA general secretary, said his union had worked with the IJHS since the merger announcement in November 1994 to ensure members' interests were protected.

"We have secured key agreements that there will be no compulsory redundancies, on pay and benefits protection and on retraining and redeployment opportunities," he said.

200 jobs cut in Halifax review

Halifax Building Society, which is in the throes of a £10bn stock market flotation, is cutting around 200 jobs from its head offices in its home town and Leeds. Staff affected by the cuts, which are part of a drive for greater efficiency, will be offered redeployment within the group "wherever possible".

"Our intent is to position the Halifax for future growth, in line with our mission to be the biggest and best personal finance business in the UK," chief executive Mike Blackburn said.

He added: "This means providing our growing opera-

tions with additional, highly skilled staff, at the same time as creating a more efficient and effective central support function for the group as a whole."

Halifax, which last year merged with Leeds building society, intends to lose a total of 1,200 jobs, but simultaneously create 1,000 posts in its general insurance and direct telephone banking business.

Halifax employs a total of 27,000 people, including 3,500 at the Halifax head office and 1,500 in Leeds. The majority of the job cuts announced yesterday will be in Halifax.

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ANT SHORTS

DATA BANK

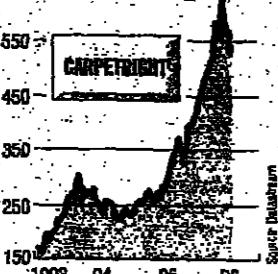
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4236.9 +5.9FT-SE 350
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Gilt's Index
92.77 -0.18

SHARE SPOTLIGHT

share price, pence



Investors pile into carpets after Allied's price cut

Carpets were king yesterday as investors piled into two of the sector's biggest players. The welcome mat was rolled out for Allied Carpets, the leading carpet retailer making its stock market debut, while rival Carpetright, headed by the irrepressible Lord Harris of Peckham, rode high on news that sales in the first 12 weeks of the year were a third up on the same time a year ago.

Last week Allied succumbed to recent stock market turbulence by cutting its flotation price to 215p, at the lower end of the 205p-235p range indicated in the prospectus. Although the intermediaries offer was not fully taken up, such caution proved somewhat excessive as the shares raced to a 19p premium on their first day of trading. A chunky 9.1 million shares changed hands.

At the offer price, Allied stands on a prospective price-earning multiple of 13 times,

substantially below the high teens rating Carpetright commands. But brokers like Mees Pierson have pencilled in compound growth of at least 40 per cent over the next three years as the store opening programme is rolled out, and reckon the shares could hit 300p by next summer.

Although margins are half those of Carpetright, Allied is seen as pinching market share from the independents, who still control 58 per cent of the carpet trade and target the same middle-to-upper income customer as Allied. Moreover, the carpet market itself is set to grow again as the number of housing transactions increases with rising consumer confidence.

But the anticipated switching out of Carpetright into Allied failed to materialise as Lord Harris gave shareholders an upbeat trading assessment at their annual general meeting. He disputed market lead-

ership with Allied by claiming a 14 per cent share and reiterated his aim of opening 25 more stores this year. The shares responded by closing 25p higher at 347p.

A firm start on Wall Street reinforced the Footsie, which ended the session at an intra-day high of 3708.4, up 27.1 points. News that Tesco would not be bidding for French retailer Docks de France also helped sentiment. Dealers had feared a rights issue of up to £1.5bn to fund the deal.

Tesco, up 8p at 260p, was the second best performing blue chip of the day behind BSkyB. Shares in the satellite broadcaster hit a record high of

494p, 14p better on the day, as fears of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission over its links with leading cable television operators receded.

Technology stocks, which have been hit hard by the recent sell-off on both sides of the Atlantic, were back in demand following strong fourth quarter earnings from software giant Microsoft.

Among the second and third liners, Micro Focus took a 40p rise to 770p, CML Microsystems rose 5p to 109p, while Epic Multimedia, doing the rounds among institutional investors, rebounded 7p to 78p.

Among the banks, HSBC

put on 25.5p at 1,068p after a profits upgrading from brokers Merrill Lynch and Goldman Sachs ahead of the interim results in the next two weeks.

BZW's global hunt for buyers of Standard Life's 29 per cent stake in Bank of Scotland ends today with the close of its international book-building exercise. Bids towards the upper end of 220-230p a share range are understood to have been submitted, a small discount to last night's 230.5p closing price. Pricing and allocation of the shares could be announced later on today.

British Gas extended yesterday's gains, adding a further 5p to 195.5p on positive reaction to the industry regulator Ofgas's decision to delay a pricing decision about its UK pipeline arm.

British Airways took a hit late in the session as the President of the Board of Trade, Ian Lang, gave UK competition

authorities the go-ahead to investigate the carrier's proposed alliance with American Airlines. BA's shares ended 4.5 lower at 410p after touching 517.5p earlier.

Also in the closing moments of play, Lex Service picked up 15p to 35.5p after the Minister for Defence Procurement, James Arbuthnot, announced the group had won a five-year contract to supply, maintain and manage the RAF's fleet of cars, vans and minibuses.

A profits warning from FiloFax, owner of the shares to shreds. They finished 105p down at 165p after the company warned that its UK business would be hit by WH Smith's decision to reduce its stock levels.

Siemens, the former Raymers jewellery chain, closed 1.5p higher at 24.5p despite denying reports it had agreed the sale of its UK businesses to venture capitalist Apax partners for about £280m.

TAKING STOCK

Shares in Shield Diagnostics, the Dundee-based medical diagnostics company, rose 13p to 144p after Hamish Hale, the chairman, picked up 40,000 shares at 133p. The timing of the deal could be significant. Investors are awaiting the results of independent clinical trials in the US on its blood-clotting testing kit to measure the probability of heart attacks and strokes.

Bridgend, owner of the Stocks country club in Hertfordshire, ended 2p firmer at 23p. Last year it sold the Imperial Hotel in Cork to Hanover International, where Bridgend retains a 48 per cent stake. Shares in

Hanover were suspended yesterday pending approval of a £40m deal to buy six hotels to be funded by a placing and open offer. Bridgend is seen benefiting from the deal.



MARKET REPORT

PATRICK TOOHER

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The Stagecoach of Britain

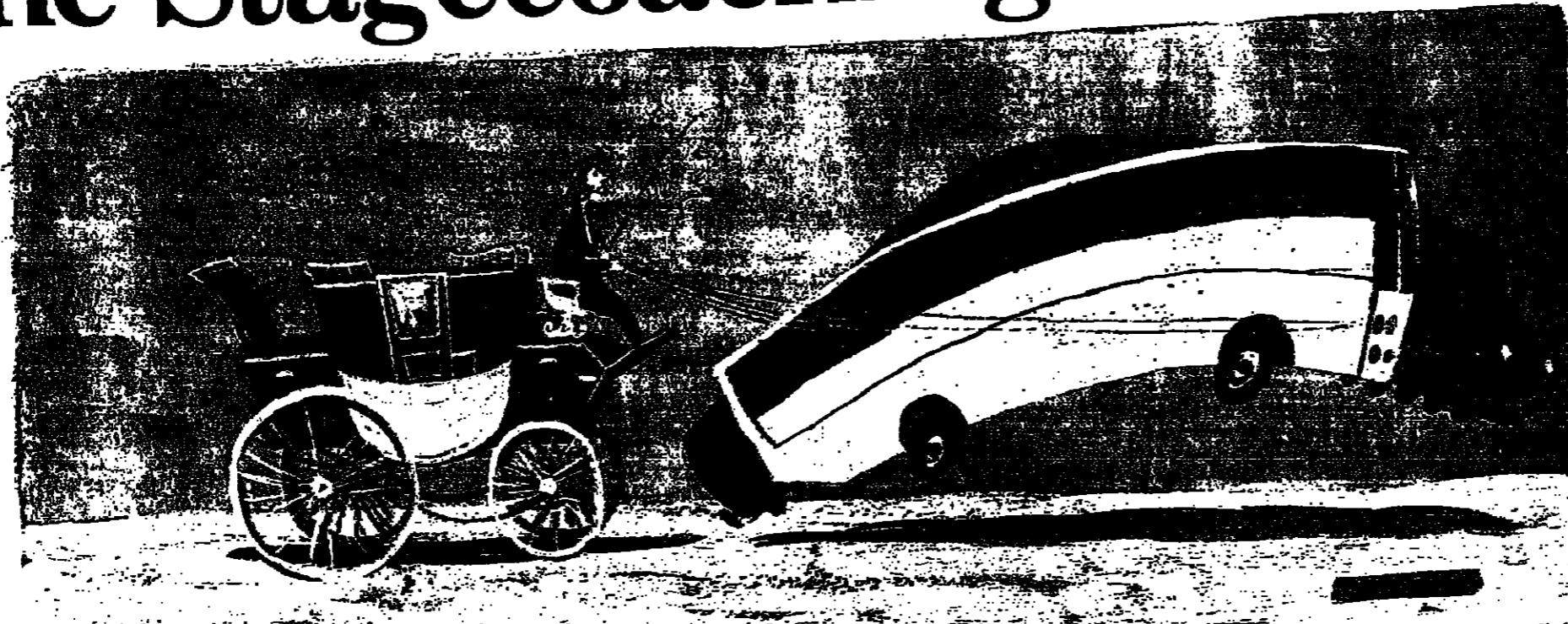
A two-bus firm now has a £501m turnover, writes Christian Wolmar

The "Stagecoach" of Britain is gathering what seems to be unstoppable speed.

Having grown from a two-bus operation in 1980 to a multi-national, publicly-quoted concern, Stagecoach now has a turnover of £501m and profits of £43.6m, as revealed in its annual report, published yesterday.

In the past year the company has added a string of bus companies to its holdings, and has won the prize rail franchise of South West Trains, the largest on the network, with a turnover of £260m - most of which is not included in last year's accounts, as the company did not take over until February.

All this growth has taken place in an industry which is so unfashionable that it seldom finds a mention in this or any



other newspaper. Buses are for the poor, the young and the infirm, those who cannot afford to use a car and normally receive little commercial interest.

Buses may not be trendy, but they are attractive for companies wishing to grow quickly.

Until the industry was deregulated a decade ago, most bus services were run by local coun-

cils with timetables that had been unchanged for years, and buses were subsidised from the rates. Deregulation changed all that. Anyone with an old

banger could register to run a bus service, and there was fierce competition on the popular routes. Inevitably, some smaller companies grew quickly.

Cross-subsidising little-used services with the profits from the most popular ones was no longer possible. Only loss-making routes continued to be subsidised by local councils and these were tendered out with private companies often winning the contracts.

In the ensuing bus wars, Stagecoach came out the winner. It used strong tactics, often running buses just in front of those of the existing company to ensure that it mopped up the passengers. There have been 20 references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and four enquiries.

The reports have been highly critical. In Lancaster, for example, the acquisition of the local transport company was found by the MMC to be "against the public interest".

On two occasions the firm has been forced to sell 20 per cent stakes in adjacent bus companies. In Strathclyde, Stagecoach was told it could not merge with another local firm; in several other places it was criticised for tactics against local operators.

The height of Stagecoach's

aggression was in Darlington, a

town which has now become

more famous for its bus war

than for its railway history.

In the summer of 1994,

Stagecoach lost out in its at-

tempt to buy the local municipally owned Darlington Trans-

port Company (DTC) to a riva-

lal, Yorkshire Trans.

Stagecoach did not take its

defeat lying down. Instead, its

local subsidiary, Busways, re-

cruited many of DTC's drivers

by offering them a £1,000 bonus and a guarantee of three years' work, and began running free buses, claiming it could not charge because it took a month to obtain a licence.

DTC went bust under this pressure after just three days, and the council's bus firm became valueless.

Yet, despite the widespread criticism of Stagecoach, there is general acceptance, even amongst its opponents, that the firm tries to run good services. It has recently bought nearly 1,000 new buses, a scale of acquisition unheard of in the industry since deregulation. Brian Souter, the chairman, boasted yesterday that the average age of the fleet had been reduced from 9.1 years to 8.7, and that as the new buses came on stream over the next year, the figure would go down to 8.1. Ironically, for such an aggressive private company, Stagecoach argues consistently that local monopolies are the best way of operating services. Added to this, the Tory ethic has been to create competition, and this has caused much of the conflict between Stagecoach and the regulatory regime.

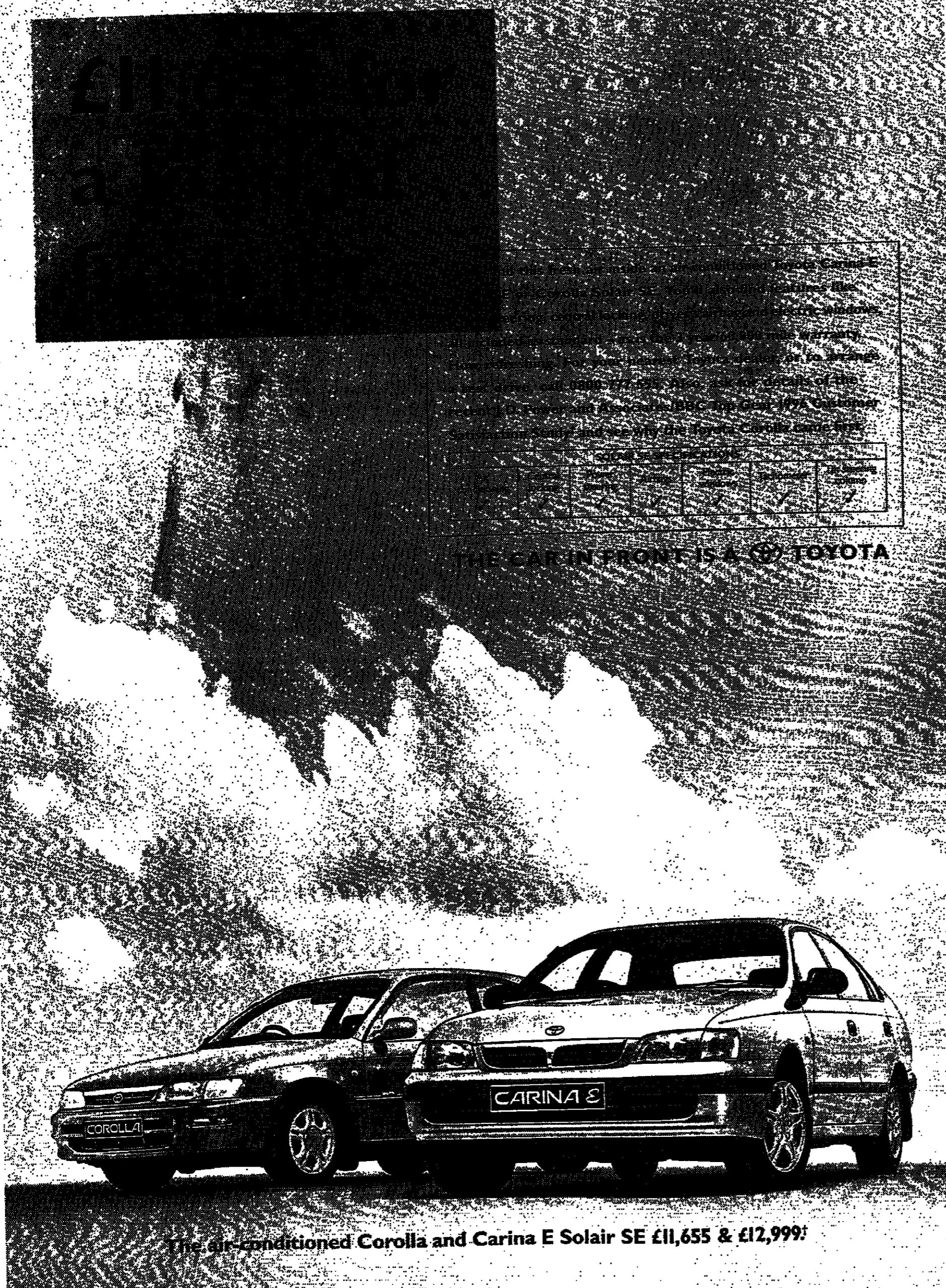
The bus industry will inevitably see more acquisitions and mergers; its economics dictate that bigger companies are more cost effective. They can use their muscle to buy buses at up to 20 per cent compared with their smaller competitors, and can save even more on spares and equipment.

They can also make profits on property acquisitions by moving bus stations and depots out of town. And Stagecoach is famously lean, with few levels of managers. It is the white-collar workers who tend to be shown the door when the company makes an acquisition - rather than the drivers, who are made to work longer hours but usually keep their jobs.

With fewer bus companies remaining on the market, Mr Souter said yesterday that Stagecoach, which has already bid for most rail franchises, will try for all 12 remaining companies not yet on the market. It is already short-listed for the Cardiff Railway franchise.

The economic pressure towards bus mergers and the rail bids therefore means that Mr Souter may well achieve his aim of running a £2bn company by the end of the decade. But this is a tall order: the company will need to quadruple in size between 1995 and 2000.

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